

MINISTERING TO LATINO IMMIGRANTS:  
A CASE STUDY OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE CONGREGATION  
CADELERO DE DIOS (CCD) IN THE CITY OF  
LYNN, MASSACHUSETTS

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## **ASTRACT**

This work is an analytical and systemic study on ministering to Latino immigrants in the city of Lynn, Massachusetts. The overall framework of this project is reflected in what Dr. Eldin Villafañe refers to as “the hermeneutical circle of social ethics.” The description of this paradigm involved three important steps, which have each been presented from a systemic point of view: Clarification -What going on? Conceptualization –What does the Bible and other pertinent discipline say? Confrontation-How do we respond?

The first step, Clarification involves doing careful social analysis to gain a contextual and comprehensive picture of the issue. It includes three important element: The context of the Latino immigrants, the relevant needs of the Latino immigrants, and the context of the Congregation Candelero de Dios. (it is the introduction and Chapter one). The second step, Conceptualization involves biblical and theological reflection. After reviewing the pertinent literature, it looks to developing an urban theology for ministry to Latino Immigrants. This step also involves doing system reflection (project design) and consulting other relevant sources (it is Chapter Two to Four). The third step, Confrontation involves developing clear strategies-consistent with a systems view of reality-that flow out of confluence of the first two steps (Chapter Five). This work represents the attempt of a Latino church in the city of Lynn to develop a biblical sound and sociologically relevant ministry to Latino immigrants.

## **PART I: CLARIFICATION**

### **INTRODUCTION**

For many years, the city of Lynn has been known as the "City of Sin." It has been characterized with a very bad reputation: prostitution, drug addicts, drug dealers, illegal immigrants, pregnant 14 years olds, deadbeat teenage dad, welfare cheats and vagrants. A city with a huge Latinos population, Lynn has more than 20,000 Latino immigrants. They have come o this country looking for the dream of a better economic and social life that they could not have in their original country. This has been a very difficult dream for them to achieve. Their condition of living becomes very critical, experiencing: immigration, social, emotional, spiritual, educational problems. Language, health insurance, and other relevant needs characterize the Latino community. The Congregation Candelero de Dios (CCD), located in Lynn, with a membership predominantly of Latino immigrants, has the purpose to work and minister to those who live in the city with such needs. We are called to help those poor and needy people, and to have an outreach to those who have been suffering in this social and evil world.<sup>1</sup> The Lord call the church to bring his *Shalom* to the community and to have a relevant ministry-to touch the needs of the people.

A big challenge for our congregation is to fulfill a ministerial responsibility of compassionate love and social justice among the Latino immigrants in the city of Lynn. The Lord of lords and the King of kings has delegated to us, to proclaim the Gospel of

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<sup>1</sup> Graham Standish, *Becoming a Blessed Church* (Dordon, Virginia: The Alba, Institute, 2005), 7.



Jesus Christ in a contextualized manner by responding to the needs of people.

Today, if we ask whether the world in which we live is good or evil, we must answer that it is evil. There has been oppression and suffering of the poor, particularly of the immigrant Latinos. Harvie M. Conn and Manuel Ortiz speak about the spiritual warfare of this evil world:

We are engaged in constant spiritual warfare with the principalities and power of evil, who are seeking to overthrow the church and frustrate its task of world evangelization. We know our need to equip ourselves with God's amour and to fight this battle with the spiritual weapon of truth and prayer.<sup>2</sup>

The society in which we live, has been dominated by the power of the king of this world. It is necessary to fight the battle with the Word of God. The church's responsibility is to fulfill the mission of the proclamation of a contextualized message, to set free the oppressed and to bring peace to the suffering people.

The purpose of this thesis is to present the theological principles that the Lord has given us for the liberation of the oppressed from the oppressor. Our purpose is to minister to the Latino immigrants in the city of Lynn, who have been suffering socially, emotionally and spiritually. Our ministry is to those needy people.

### **Brief Introduction to Latino Immigrant Ministry and Mission**

To speak about ministry and mission to Latino immigrants, is to speak about justice, compassion and love for the suffering. The struggle of a given social segment is to transform itself towards an important quality of life.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Harvie M. Conn and Manuel Ortiz, *The Kingdom, the City and the People of God: Urban ministry* (Downer Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 343.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 274.

The ministry and mission of the church becomes a process by which persons and societies realize the full potential of human life in the context of social justice. Essentially a people's struggle is one in which the poor and oppressed are active participants and beneficiaries.<sup>4</sup>

A good ministry among Latinos, includes prayer for the city's economic health, for safety from conflict, and violence, for reformation of the political process, for the well-being and happiness of all who live in that city, and for justice for all, but especially justice for the poor. The ministry and mission to Latino immigrants, has a spiritual component. The transformation of the Latino Community, by the power of the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ happens when Christian witness in the inner city is authentic. Bearing witness to the truth of the gospel, in response to the questions born of suffering, exclusion, and poverty of the Latino people, our ministry needs to be impacted by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Dr. Villafañe helps us understand the church in relationship to the Holy Spirit:

The church is the Koinonia of the Spirit. It is the unique locus of the Spirit's activity in world (Rom. 8:23; 1 Cor. 6:19, Ephesians 2:14-18). It is that community which acknowledges Jesus Christ as savior and Lord, and through whom the pneumatic (risen) Christ is mediated by the Spirit. As God's colony in a human world, it is both a model and sign of redeemed and transformed relationships. It is a Koinonia of the Spirit and Koinonia with fellow Christians. It witnesses to the Reign of God's reality, by its very existence a sacrament in and to world.<sup>5</sup>

Understanding ones in the body is parallel with oneness in spirit. Only the power of the Holy Spirit of Christ can knit a community together in love and enable men and women

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 275.

<sup>5</sup> Edin Villafañe, *The Liberating Spirit: Toward an Hispanic American Pentecostal Social Ethic* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Co; 1993), 216. 217.

to know the fullness of God.<sup>6</sup>

Filled with Holy Spirit, those 120 who gathered in upper room after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus became the first part of a contagious church that grew so rapidly that society was “turned around” by their lives and witness.<sup>7</sup> Secular historians stand amazed at the small beginnings and the rapid growth of the church. The numerical and, “the divine growth of the Church (body) is the ultimate result of the body’s union with the dead. Each part contributes that for which it was placed in the body with a view to the maturity of the whole body that fullness of Christ may be in us all in all.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Mark Gornik, *To Live in Peace: Biblical Faith and the Changing Inner City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Vem B. Eerdmans Publishing Co; 2002), 92.

<sup>7</sup>Donald Riggs, *Make It Happens: Advancing To The Larger Local Church* (Wrsaw, IN: LP Production, 1980), 40.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 41.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Ministry Setting and Challenges:**

#### **Ministering to Latino Immigrants in the City of Lynn, Massachusetts**

#### **Understanding the Context of the Latino Immigrants In the City of Lynn**

##### **Historical Context of the Latino Immigrants**

The term Latino is a new and ambiguous invention. It is a cultural category that has no precise racial significance. Indeed, Latinos are white, black, indigenous, and every possible combination there of. The term also lacks the specificity regarding national origin that terms such as *Irish American* and *Italian American* convey.<sup>9</sup> Latinos come from over a dozen countries as varied as Mexico, Centro America and South America, and the Dominican Republic, includes Puerto Ricans, who may move freely between the island and the mainland as U.S. citizens.<sup>10</sup>

Latinos are a work in progress; they are a people in the process of becoming, as they settle in unprecedented numbers in the United States. We will minister to all types of Latino immigrants. Latinos today are players in social spaces where racial and ethnic categories have high-stakes political and economic implications. The largest wave of immigration in U. S. history- the wave responsible for the current Latino-ization of the country- took place after the great struggles of the civil rights movement.<sup>11</sup> Latinos identify themselves based on place of origin, geographical location, cultural assimilation,

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<sup>9</sup> Marcelo Suarez-Orozco & Mariela M. Paez, *Latino: Remaking America* (Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2002), 3. 4.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

and time of residence in the United States. Therefore, Latinos have a plurality. The US Census Bureaus reports that there are approximately 39 million people in the United States who identify themselves as Latinos, which is a term understood now as bearing geographical origin, cultural meaning and racial connotation.<sup>12</sup>

Latinos are generating profound changes in the American setting by their sheer numbers, linguistic practices, and cultural affinities to the lands they left behind.<sup>13</sup>

According to the US census, Latinos are present in each one of the 50 states. This spatial presence shows that the whole of the US society has been altered sociologically, economically and politically.<sup>14</sup>

### **Sociological Context of Latino Immigrants**

It is also necessary to see the sociological context of the Latino immigrants in the city of Lynn; which is very complex and some times very critical, due to their illegal status of immigration. Many of them come to this country without legal documents, thinking of realizing the dream that they could not have in their own country, a better economic and social life. This has been a very difficult dream for them to achieve. Therefore their social life becomes very affected, experiencing problems of: education, housing, unemployment, health insurance, language, and other sociological conditions. Life is very difficult in this country without legal documents. Luis Benavides analyzes the legal status of Latino Immigrants under a sociological perspective. He presents the following statement:

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<sup>12</sup> Luis Benavides, *Latinos Christianity: History, Ministry and Theology The New England United Methodist Situation* (Pittsfield Ma: The New England United Methodist Churches, 2005), 18.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

The Legal resistance imposed by the immigration and Naturalization Services to prevent undocumented immigration has been unsuccessful. This research prefers to use the word undocumented over against illegal because the word illegal bears a crime mentality that will perpetuate the slavery system, if we continue to use it. It is an oppressive language. We can speak of illegal immigration but not illegal immigrants. The truth is that the real condition of the US economy, along with the aftermath of September 11<sup>th</sup>, has not discourage either documented or undocumented immigration.<sup>15</sup>

Latino immigrants are the most vulnerable group of this country today.<sup>16</sup>

The sociological context of the Latino immigrants could be also analyzed under a context of crime and poverty. Because of their illegal status, unemployment, and the barrier of the language. Such poor conditions are a reality. Many of the Latino young adults finish the high school in the city of Lynn. But only a few of them go to college to get an associate degree. Seeing how education has been a sociological problem for the Latino immigrants in the city of Lynn, is important to understanding their needs. The percentage of children having difficult speaking English increased in recent years.<sup>17</sup> The sociological context of the Latino immigrants is seen in a cultural and living reality of religion, education and politics. Every reform of politics raises the banner of the Latino immigrant families as the solution to the social problem of their own creation.

### **Religious Context of the Latino Immigrants**

The religious context of the Latino immigrants is a part of transnational membership with Catholic Church.<sup>18</sup> Most of them come to this country with their predominantly traditional background of membership with the Catholic Church. They use their

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>17</sup> Massachusetts Statistics and Demographics (Lynn, Massachusetts: Census 2000)

<sup>18</sup> Suarez-Orozco and Paez, 4.

transnational membership to express different combination of allegiance to their home.

Suares-Orosco and Paez present the following statement in relation to the Hispanic person and the Catholic church:

To attract them, the Catholic Church offered a generic, no-nation-specific “Hispanic” religious experience. They search for social and spiritual comfort, the need to fulfill the sacrament, lifestyle demands, and aspirations to social mobility drew more migrants to formal and traditional church.<sup>19</sup>

Catholic Church traditionally has supported the Latino immigrants. Many Latinos know the reality of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in this country. Their membership in the evangelical church, on many occasions becomes affected, due to their legal and social immigration status. Therefore, sometimes they cannot enjoy their membership, even within the Latino churches.

Most of the Latino Evangelical churches in the city of Lynn, are small congregations, with a complex Latino immigrant membership. Actually the city has about 10 Latino Evangelical churches. Three of those 10, have their own building or temple; the others are renting spaces from other churches, in order to have their regular meetings.

Due to the conversions of the Latinos to Christ, which are increasing, the positive impacts of Protestant membership may reverberate among the Latino community as whole. The Latino churches in the city of Lynn, as many Latino churches, are characterized by a dynamic and a charismatic worship of the Lord. The church is an open place for worship, prayer and strength.<sup>20</sup>

Due to an influx of Latino immigrants who arrive in the United states with their

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>20</sup> Eldin Villafañe, *A Prayer for the City: Further Reflections On Urban Ministry* (Austing, TX: AETH, 2001), 47.

own religious preference, it is reasonable for them to look for the church of their choice or to establish their own denominational church. This seems to be a major reason why there are so many small Latino churches in this state.

### **Understanding the Relevant needs of Latino Immigrants**

#### **The Spiritual Need of the Latino Immigrants**

The Bible is very clear in chapter 3 of the book of Genesis, indicating that the Fall provides a holistic picture of our sinful dilemma. The disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, bring about profound alienation and spiritual psychological and social decline.<sup>21</sup> The results of the Fall touch the center of life, separating us from God. From this point on, all humanity is hiding from God. No one seeks after God (Rom. 3:11).

Sin has made its mark on all of society and life.<sup>22</sup> Every human being is born with the touch of the first parents: “all have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God” (Rom 3:23).

The spiritual need of the Latino immigrants, as that of any other ethnic group or race, is an important part of life to which human beings must pay attention. In order to fulfill this spiritual need, a person must receive Him who is the heavenly provider, Jesus Christ. Proclaiming his mighty name is necessary to establish an effective ministry among the poor and Latino community.

This society presents human, goodness, positive thinking, self help, and self-effort. We can certainly appreciate those things; but the only place in which the Latino

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<sup>21</sup> Conn & Ortiz, 343.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid; 145.



immigrants community can find solution for their spiritual need, is from God through His son Jesus Christ. Jesus says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through me" (John 14: 6). God says, "I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand" (John 10: 28).

God gives us "the real life" through His Son, Christ. And only through His Son.<sup>23</sup> Theologically speaking, Christ is the preeminent message--not good works, not positive thinking, not good books, not being widely traveled or earning a good education. Christ, and Christ alone, will give us the life of God. God dispenses His supernatural power to anyone who say, "I want it." Whether we are the richest of the rich, the poorest of the poor, or anywhere between, all we have to do is take a gift. And the gift is the power of God, through faith in His Son. The church is the instrument which the Lord has delegated the responsibility of supplying the spiritual need of all human beings.

Our goal is to help Latino immigrants of our community, to see the church as the community in whom Christ dwells, turned outward in action toward world (1 Corinth 12: 12-27).<sup>24</sup>

The mission to minister to Latino immigrants could be a very complex mission to fulfill. We realize that exploring the sociological context of the immigrant Latinos in the city of Lynn, will help us to clarify our ministry to them.

### **The Sociological need of the Latino Immigrants**

Even though Latinos are the fastest-growing demographic group in this country, the Latino community remains sociologically a vulnerable group in which poverty,

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<sup>23</sup> Jim Herrington, Robert Creech & Trisha Taylor, *The Leader's Journey* (California: HB Printing, 2003), 6.

<sup>24</sup> Conn & Ortiz, 243.

education, health insurance, employment, and upward mobility are still major concerns demanding social justice.

In urban ministry, the church must recognize and acknowledge the role of sinful social structures. Confronting sin and evil means that spiritual warfare must correspond to the geography of social evil. The Gospel of the Kingdom, therefore, is not only to be understood in the context of individual experience, but also understood in the context of social structural evil.

Under a biblical and theological context, the Gospel message has a strong social implication. The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross not only has implications for the spiritual liberation of the person, it also has an implication on the social context. Jesus was an authentic example, sociologically helping the suffering and the poor people. He contextualized his ministry, giving, caring and supporting the poor and all social and emotional needs of the people. His contextualized gospel brings a message of hope to the poor and to the socially marginalized people, such as the immigrants and Latino people. The church's responsibility is to follow the pragmatic example of Jesus' ministry. He gave to the church hope that in the suffering of the cross, they could appropriate the power of the kingdom, and transform Latino immigrants and urban communities.

The Latino immigrants in the city of Lynn live in a sociological context of suffering, poverty, housing, needs health insurance and employment deficits. Educational needs and immigration issues are other social problems that have been affecting the Latino community in the city of Lynn. Most of them come to this country without legal documents, and without even finishing high school in their own country. Due to this

situation, Latinos find it difficult to obtain regular jobs in the city of Lynn. The language (English ) has also become a barrier for their communication. They do any kind of work, under the table, in order to survive and support their families. We can find undocumented Latino immigrants, working in car wash stations, landscaping, and other known places of the city.

If we look back to the time when Jesus developed his ministry, we find that he needed to deal with social and emotional problems among the poor and suffering people. His theological mission was to create the positive environment for the liberation of the poor and suffering people from the social injustices of society. His prophetic words and the message of the cross and resurrection is a clear manifestation of love, compassion, and social justice for the poor and anyone who is suffering from this evil in this society. As members of the mystical body of Christ, we have been delegated by the Lord to ministry and to fulfill the divine mandate of love, compassion and liberation to those suffering people. The church becomes a therapeutic community; a community of counseling to proclaim *Shalom* with God and the *Shalom* of God. Also the church liturgy should be in the context of the Spirit's community.<sup>25</sup> We are called to be a healing church, to minister and to heal those who suffer with emotional and spiritual pains. N. Graham Standish comments about the church as a healing instrument.

Becoming a healing church also means emphasizing health and holiness in all that we are doing. For instance, staff and leaders in congregations need to emphasize healthy relationship along with an intolerance of dysfunction. We need to be clear that staff and leaders to treat each other with Christ's love and care- the foundation of a healthy, holy church.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Villafañe, *A Prayer for the City*, 111.

<sup>26</sup> Graham Standish, *Becoming a Blessed Church* (Herdon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2005), 85.

Our responsibility is to care and to heal people, through an effective and relevant ministry. We have been called to proclaim the justice of God. According to Ephesians 5:8-9, grace invokes a call to do justice and live righteously: "Live as children of light and find out what pleases the Lord."<sup>27</sup>

One axiomatic reality is the fact that the church has a very strong mission to proclaim spiritual liberation to this sinful and evil society. The church also has a sociological and practical mission to server the suffering, poor and needy people. Liberation Theology calls it "humanization." In other words, the church needs to be congruent and identified with the problem of the suffering. Today, the Latino immigrants are among the most suffering people in this country.

The most conspicuous sociological problems for Latinos today are in the area of health, education, housing, poverty, and employment. Each one of these sociological conditions needs to be seen by the church, under a missional and theological perspective. The church has a therapeutic and sociological mission to provide assistance for suffering people. The mission of the church is also to rebuild what needs to be rebuilt, in order to have a healthy community. The mission requires a set of distinctive practices, commitments, and skills.<sup>28</sup> The church was created to be a place of unity and community in which Christ's compassion, love and God's Spirit reign.<sup>29</sup> Through love and compassion, the sociological needs of our people are approached in a biblical and relevant context. Through its lifestyle, the church is opposed to evil offenses against the

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<sup>27</sup> Gornik, 61.

<sup>28</sup> Conni & Ortiz, 148.

<sup>29</sup> Standish, 101.

Good: racial hatred, harsh treatment of wives and children (Col. 3: 19, 21), unjust oppression of slaves (Col. 4: 1), the discord in society that promoted litigation (1 Corinth 6: 1-11). The church's good works and praise were to be sociological and use neighbor-loving demonstration of God's love for the troubled and poor (Acts 9: 36;; 2 Cor. 9:8-9; 1 Tim 5: 10; 6: 18).

The sociological function of the church is an evidence of a relevant and contextualized church's ministry, helping and to support suffering and poor people.

### **The Health Insurance Needs of the Latino Immigrants**

Incredibly more than one in every three Latinos (37 % ) in the United States is without any public or private health insurance.<sup>30</sup> Lack of health insurance creates significant barriers to obtaining needed health services, exacerbating disparities in access to health care between the status of Latinos and non-Latino people.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, the Latino immigrants that do not have health insurance in this country become a victim of physical, emotional and psychological sicknesses. The Latino health status is very poor due to the lack of access to health care and health insurance. The access barriers created by not having health insurance coverage undoubtedly contributes to the overall disparities in health conditions between Latino and non-Latino whites.<sup>32</sup>

Most of the Latinos of the city of Lynn come to this country with better health status than would be expected, given their economic circumstance. Many of them become

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<sup>30</sup> Orozco and Paez, 234.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 236.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid; 237

victims of different illnesses due to lack of health insurance. This is the reality of the Latino community, not just in the city of Lynn, but in every city of this country.

Orozco and Paez said:

Health insurance coverage and access to medical care can ameliorate and improve Latinos' health problems and reduce disparities even if they cannot compensate fully for the powerful effects on health status of adverse economic and social factors. For persons in all ethnic groups, lack of health insurance coverage results in weak connections to the health care system and poor access to health services.<sup>33</sup>

Insured Latinos in fair or poor health visit physicians more often than their insured counterparts; they are more likely to receive the care they need to manage their chronic conditions. The church of Jesus Christ cannot be silenced and inactive in view of the needs and crisis of the Latino immigrants. This is the time of the church to cultivate a grace-filled ministry and mission. The churches that offer grace-filled ministry are the ones that excel at ministry and mission to the divorce, the single, the mentally ill, Latino immigrants without health insurance, the illiterate, the poor, the hungry, the homeless, the disabled, and especially, the spiritually hungry.<sup>34</sup>

The church is the organism and body created by the Lord, to provide the message of peace, and comfort to those needy and suffering people.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid; 238

<sup>34</sup> Standish, 138

## **Understanding the Context of the Congregation Candelero de Dios (CCD)**

### **Historical Context of the CCD**

The Congregation Candelero de Dios (CCD) was founded in 1974 in the city of Salem, Massachusetts, by members from another church in the city of Lawrence, Massachusetts. At that time, the church was known under the name of *the First Spanish Free Methodist Church* of Salem, Massachusetts. The church was a very structured and traditional church, affiliated with the Free Methodist Church of North America. While the church was growing under the ministry of a lay local minister, it was necessary to look for an ordained minister, who could develop the leadership of the church and provide the Holy Supper and other religious obligations. Therefore, in March 13, 1978, the New England Conference of the Free Methodist Church of North America, decide to appoint this author as the pastor of this congregation. Since that time, this author has been working very hard in ministrying to the church as it serves the Kingdom of the Lord.

In 1984, the Church moved to the city of Lynn, Massachusetts, the majority of the members were coming from that city. Many things have been happening in our congregation since that time. We have been experiencing a very dynamic and transitional history as a traditional church.

Due to the new and young generation of membership, CCD has developed different ministerial strategies to bring the *Shalom* to the Latino community of the city of Lynn. One of these strategies was to change the name of the church, from The First Spanish Free Methodist Church of Lynn, to Congregation Candelero de Dios (Candlestick of God). All traditional ways to proclaim the Kingdom of the Lord, and to worship Him,

have been contextualized to be pertinent and relevant. Through an energetic contextualized and vibrant worship services, our congregation has witnessed remarkable growth since the year 2000, when the Lord changed the vision of the church. The purpose of our congregation is to minister in a contextualized manner to the Latino immigrants community in the city of Lynn.

### **Sociological Context of the CCD**

The Congregation Candelero de Dios (CCD) is a multinational Latino Church. The current average adults in attendance at our Sunday morning services is approximately 200. Of those 200, approximately 85 % are from the Caribbean (Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico), 8 % from Central America, 5 % from South America, and 2 % from the United States. Being a multinational Latino bilingual congregation, all activities are bilingual. This very vulnerable group experiences poverty, lack of education, no health insurance, and unemployment as daily and ongoing problems. The social life of the membership is seen as a struggle for existence and of survival and resistance against oppression. About 30 % adults of the congregation have finished high school, most of them in their original country, 20 % of the young adults finished high school, and 5 % finished college in this country. The rest have not finish high school. Many of them cannot even read. About 5 % of the Congregation are not legal immigrants into this country.

The social life for the Latino immigrants, often becomes a lonely life of suffering, particularly for those immigrants who are in this country without the proper immigration



status. They also become economically affected, and therefore are without the financial means to participate in a normal life.

### **Ministerial Context of CCD**

I have been working in this congregation since 1978, affiliated with the Free Methodist Church of North America. After several years working with a structured and traditional local program in the church, nothing relevant happen for a long period of time. In 2000, after several months of prayer, asking the Lord for new strategies for the ministry, the Lord gave me a new vision for the congregation, to change the name of the and to reorganize the order of the local ministry. Since that time, many things have been happening in our Congregation. New people are coming to receive Jesus Christ as their personal savior as the result of a contextualized Gospel of Christ and a relevant worship with contemporary music. The church has been organized by ministries with area pastors. Actually our congregation is functioning with 25 ministries and 7 area pastors.

### **Contextualized Ministry to the Latino Immigrants**

We are living in a difficult and complex society, in which people are not too happy with themselves and the social environment from whence they come. This is the case of Latino immigrants in this country. They come to this country looking for a better economic and social life, without thinking what would be the future of their lives. Many of them need to go back to their original country, due to their struggle and unsuccessful personal life; others remain here, fighting the social system.

Latino is just a group name comprised of different cultures and context of precedence (coming from different Latin American countries).

The rhetorical question is how would respond to the ministry implemented by a Latino church?

### **The Gospel as Mission in Action for the Latino Immigrants**

Before we speak about the gospel as mission and action, the word “gospel” must be defined. The English noun “gospel” is the translation of the Greek word εὐαγγέλιον, commonly understood to designated “good news” as the corresponding verb *εὐγγελιζεσθαι* is normally translated “to proclaim good news” or “to preach (the) good news.” Also used for bringing news about victories or other joyful events, but soon becomes synonymous with and stands for the bringing of any news good or bad.<sup>35</sup> Today the word *gospel* could be interpreted under a context of praxis and contextualization of the Word of God, for the need of the people. The Lord called us to preach the good news to every body. He commanded us: “go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature”. Mark 16:15.<sup>36</sup> To fulfill the great commission of the Master, there is a plea to get out from our seclusion behind closed doors; to break down barriers; to be distributed and dispersed to a needy world; to grasp the dying torch, fan the torch into a glowing flame with the light of our glorious Gospel.<sup>37</sup>

The gospel of mission in action is also to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ with power to the Latino community.. Jesus employed his Spirit-given authority to, “preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captive, to give sight to the blind, to set

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<sup>35</sup> Helmut Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1990), 1.

<sup>36</sup> Elmer L. Bolileaus, *Beyond Our Border* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Light & Life Press, 1979), 9.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid; 10.

at liberty the oppressed, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4: 18-19).

The church, if it is to follow today His example, must go forth into the Latino community and do these same things. In order to fulfill an effective evangelistic mission, the church must be empowered by the Holy Spirit. Jesus longed for His disciples to be filled with the Holy Spirit. He told them it was necessary for him to go away and that it was better to send the Holy Spirit to them (John 16:7). It was also confirmed by Jesus that one who prayed in faith would do greater things than He, because He was going to the Father and from there would send the Holy Spirit to empower them (John 14:12; 16:7). Spirit-filled people to proclaim and to fulfill the mission of the Gospel of Jesus Christ are the church’s greatest need today.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, the church must relate to the Latino community which is in need of a contextualized Gospel. A contextualized gospel means to touch the needs of the people through social justice, compassion, love education, counseling, liberation and advocacy intervention.

Jesus counsels us not to think as a matter of ritual worship—prayer and tithing—while ignoring the most important matters of justice, mercy, and compassion.<sup>39</sup> Christians are part of the body of Christ, knit together by the Holy Spirit into the community of worship and witness, within the world created by God for which Christ gave himself.<sup>40</sup> The church’s responsibility is to present the necessary and relevant alternatives for the poor and weak people. The church understands the suffering of Jesus was for the poor.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Wesley L. Duewel, *More God More Power* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Light & Light Press, 200).

<sup>39</sup> Nile Harper, *Urban Church Vital Signs: Beyond Charity Toward Justice* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: WB Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), 310.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 311.

<sup>41</sup> Mirslav Volf, *Exclusion & Embrace* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 22.

## **Advocacy Intervention for the Latino Immigrants**

The term advocacy, is a very important word to use in social, political, and religious circles. An umbrella term for organized activism related to a particular set of issues, advocacy is expected to be non-deceptive and in good faith, though it is sometimes tainted by use for propaganda.<sup>42</sup> The term almost always designates an organized group often representing special interests.<sup>43</sup> Under a Christian perspective, the term advocacy could be interpreted as love, compassion and mercy for those who are suffering as a consequence of their life's limitations.

Concern for human rights is one of the most positive and hopeful advocacy topics in the world today. Never before in history has this concern been so openly manifested. The fact that immigrant people are foremost in this desire to establish justice and combat injustice gives additional cause for hope and even optimism.<sup>44</sup>

The church's responsibility is to bring a message of hope and social justice for the suffering and needy people, through an advocacy intervention of human rights for the Latino immigrants, thus the church will fulfill the mission of a practical gospel.

The church pursues human rights for political, cultural, civil, and religious freedom. We realize that some of these human rights are still denied to many Latino immigrants. Through the declaration of human rights, the essential human needs are: the right to survive, the right to basic education and medical services, the right to work and meet other human needs. The lack of these basic necessities makes the lives of millions of

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<sup>42</sup> Arthur McCormack, *The Population Explosion: A Christian Concern* (New York, N.Y.: Harper & Row Publisher, 1973), 40.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid; 41.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

Latino families a burden instead of a joy and often makes families seem a disaster rather than a pleasure.<sup>45</sup> Advocacy is relevant for those Latino families in need and suffering, who feel powerless to speak for them selves. Aden & Hughes say the following:

Scripture reading and preaching are not just words, about Christ, not just talk what new life can mean, but they are the means through which the crucified and risen Lord speaks suffers today. "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me" (John 14:1). Christ challenges those who suffer and are need to remind ourselves: The presence of Christ in the Word is at least partially hidden from our cloudy vision; consequently, we may no be able to see past the trouble of the moment. So faith becomes the fact of trusting in the words and his promises in spite of appearances.<sup>46</sup>

The church as a divine organism, has the mandate and the means to carry out a mission of intervention.

The life of a Christian should be characterized by a joyous abandonment of possessions. We can and should enjoy material things, but only in a shared and "advocating" sense. In the full knowledge that we cannot truly own anything, since the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. (Psalm 24: 1). If we love our neighbor as we love ourselves, we must be as aware of our Latino immigrant's need as we are of our own, and be ready to share with or to advocate for the Latino immigrants.

By His teaching and His example, Jesus gave the world a clear picture of the advocate in heaven. Indeed, Jesus and His disciples constituted a microcosm of that Kingdom, who shared with each other while He advocated the Father. Jesus was their Lord and Master and yet an intimate friend. He serve them in such a complete way that

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid; 42.

<sup>46</sup> LaRoy H. Aden & Robert G. Hughes, *Preaching God's Compassion* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), 23.

He washed their feet and commanded to them to the same for each other. He also taught them an unconditional love for everyone, even opponents and mortal enemies (Luke 12: 15).

Life is a mystery, and there is much we do not understand. But life has a purpose. God has called us, to share with and advocate for and serve the Latino immigrants in His name.<sup>47</sup> The biblical command to advocate and to share our possessions, time and ideas with the poor and needed people is clear.<sup>48</sup> It is not an option, but a requirement. (Matthew 8: 20).

The writer of Hebrews presents a very strong and theological presentation about the person and humanity of Jesus Christ: "we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). His humanity, lived out in the very real context of this earthly realm, presents a life of advocacy. The example of Jesus's advocacy can be seen as he walks beside us. Advocacy is not lived just inside one's head, it must be lived out in the world. As Christ's suffering and sacrifice brought life to the Christian, the body of Christ must now suffer and sacrifice for the suffering of others. Suffering and advocacy are to be embraced, not avoided. A proper understanding of Christology challenges us to move from a place of numbness to a place of experiencing pain and suffering.

The Congregation Cabdelero de Dios (CCD) sees to have specific types of advocacy for the Latino immigrants in the city of Lynn.

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<sup>47</sup> Diane Scott, *No More Shacks* (Waco, Texas: Word Book Publisher, 1986), 126.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid; 127.

We will advocate in the following areas: education, social and family relations and immigration status. These areas of advocacy will be implemented in the manner:

- 1) *Educational advocacy*: We will encourage high school attendance, provide English and computer classes, and support vocational programs for job training. The church also will design classes to teach parenting skills.
- 2) *Social and Family relations advocacy*: We will support and provide much needed job networking, housing advise, and personal help and assistance to help the new immigrant settle into life in the United States. The church will provide services particularly for the new immigrant. The additional service will be dealing with family issues. The church provides “child care” for new immigrant families that are seeking for a job, and encourage family to participate in family and individual counseling.
- 3) *Immigration status advocacy*: New immigrants need different kinds of information and orientation and services for the initial immigration explanation and successful adjustment in this country. The church will provide and support information about the immigration components.

We are clearly conscious of a vision of the development of human beings in their holistic context, we would like to be an avenue which contributes to the systematic developing human beings in their holistic context; we would like to be an avenue which contributes to the systemic development of our Latino immigrant community.

### **Social Service and the Latino Immigrants**

In addition to providing advocacy intervention services, the Congregation Candelero de Dios (CCD) also will provide much needed social services for the Latino immigrants

and its community. This social service ministry will begin with those people who are new immigrants. We have been working already for several years, helping to support immigrant families in this matter. The church will provide the new immigrants with housing advice, and personal help and assistance for settling into life in the United States. New immigrants need different kind of information and services from the settled immigrant, for orientation and successful adjustment to the United States. Our Congregation has an immigration attorney that most immigrants can turn to for useful information and services.

The church will provide the additional social services dealing with family issues. We will provide "child care", family counseling, and a food pantry for immigrant families that work long hours and are unable to provide a primary cultural environment. The congregation, not only will implement its social ministry of aiding new immigrant families, it will also continue to provide family social services to any Latino family in the city of Lynn.

The church not only has a spiritual responsibility for the people and the city, it has a sociological and political responsibility toward the city and its citizens.. The Bible is very clear in this matter." *Pray to the Lord on its behalf*" (Jeremiah 29: 7b). Another task of the church will be to Pray for the city's physical, economic, political, social and cultural well-being. Above all, the church should pray for spiritual well-being. Pray that its citizens and its leaders will be led to right relationship with God, with neighbor, with immigrants and with self. Understanding that the process of building the *shalom* is a spiritual responsibility and task.



The prophet Jeremiah makes a sociological plan involving in the larger community, with the aim of creating communities of *shalom*. This task also is a primary responsibility of the church today. This is an axiomatic and relevant truth, even as the church struggles with the modern equivalent of the Babylonian captivity in our secularized society. In contemporary social and practical terms, the *shalom* community may be a city, immigrant community, suburban area, town, or even rural or poor village community.

The sociological function of the church becomes a pragmatic reality through the message of the prophet Jeremiah. He makes clear that the involvement with wider community will include prayer as well as social action. Intercessory prayer is needed for the welfare even of those who are the oppressors. Prayer alone, however, is not enough. It must be accompanied by justice and social action.<sup>49</sup> Creating the *shalom* of the city and serving Latino community today, requires engagement in community organizing, community economic development, provision of direct services and public advocacy for justice and peace.<sup>50</sup>

There is a strong need to provide ministry services to Latino Immigrants one that includes all Latin American immigrants. It is our challenge to turn to God in prayer in favor for the larger Hispanic immigrants and their community's transformation.

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<sup>49</sup> Conn & Ortiz, 327.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid; 327.

## PART 2: CONCEPTUALIZATION

### CHAPTER TWO

#### Literature Review

There is a limited body of literature that exists relative to this topic; but several works are applicable to this important study, and relevant to the research. The first three books concern Latino immigrants and their historical and sociological context. One is Marcelo M. Suarez-Orozco and Mariela M. Paez's *Latinos: Remaking America*, which gives us knowledge of the cultures, histories, environments, and contemporary affairs of Latin America. Eldin Villafañe's *The Liberating Spirit* helps us to see the Hispanic culture in the United States and creates a sociological and ethical paradigm for the Hispanic Pentecostal Church in the United States. Villane will help provide an understanding of ethnic identity information among Latino immigrants. Harvie M. Conn and Manuel Ortiz's *The Kingdom, the City and the People of God: Urban ministry* helps by giving a global view of urban history and demographics. The book includes a biblical-historical look at God's concern for the cities and helps to understand an affective ministry for the city. It presents strong and sociological information about urban ministry. The next three materials are critical in our urban and practical theology for ministry Latino immigrants. Both *City of God, City of Satan* by Robert Linthicum and *Seek the Peace of the City* by Eldin Villafañe will provide an urban theological perspective related to our understanding of the Kingdom of God. Miroslav Volf's landmark work, *Exclusion and Embrace*, gives us a practical and theological framework relating to reconciliation and the applicable action for justice.

The next four works will focus on confrontation and ministry strategy related to urban ministry. Nile Harper's *Urban Churches, Vital Signs* will provide an important and positive contribution to urgent discussion about the mission of the churches in America cities. This book inspires hope and stimulates the struggle for justice. Calvin Miller's *The Empowered Leader* demonstrate the success of an urban ministry through effective leadership. J. Oswald's *Spiritual Leadership* helps to see that true greatness and true leadership is found in giving ourselves in service to others, not in coaxing or inducing others to serve us. Mark Gornik's *To Live in Peace* will give the necessary information about changes necessary to indeed seek the peace of the city.

### **The Latino Immigrants and Historical Experience**

#### *Latinos: Remaking America:*

At the dawn of the new century, the more than 35 million Latinos in the United States make up roughly 12.5 percent of the total population. It is estimated that in just two generations, the United States will have the second largest number of Latinos in the world.<sup>51</sup> Suarez-Orozco and Paez, *Latinos: Remaking America*, provide a general description and sociohistorical themes for the Latino experience in the United States. This themes include: the experience of the immigration; the changing nature U.S. relations with Latin America; and the process of revitalization as Latinos enter, and complicate, the power "black-white" binary logic that has driven U.S. racial relations. The Latino immigrants come from societies with a history of unequal association with the United States, a country that has influence and sometimes even dictated political behavior in Latin America.

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<sup>51</sup>Suarez-Orozco and Paez, 9.

Suarez and Paez begins by analyzing the immigration experience of the Latino in this country. This experience has been profoundly shaped by immigration. The vast majority of Latinos are either immigrants or the children of immigrants. In 1980 there were roughly 14 million Latinos in the United States. Twenty years later, there were over 35 million. Most of them new immigrants. Large-scale immigrant from Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean has been the backbone of what U.S. scholars of now call "the new immigration."<sup>52</sup> According to Suarez-Orozco and Paez, three distinct social formations lie at the heart of an emerging Inter-American immigration system. First, an uninterrupted flow of large-scale legal (as well as undocumented) immigration from Mexico has rapidly intensified since 1980 and is structured by powerful forces and sociocultural practices that seem unaffected by unilateral policy initiative. Secondly, more time—limited "waves" (as apposed to uninterrupted "flow") of large-scale was a result of asylum seekers from Central and South American. By the early 1980s, El Salvador and Guatemala replaced Cuba as the largest source of asylum seekers arriving from the Hispanic-speaking world. Thirdly, a Caribbean pattern of intense circular migration was typified by the Puerto Rican and Dominican experiences in New York, where Dominican replaced Puerto Ricans as the largest immigrant group. Latinos began emerging as "hemispheric citizens."

A relevant feature of the new transnational framework is that even as Latinos enmesh themselves in social, economic, and political life of their new lands, they remain powerful protagonists in the economic, political and

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 10.

cultural sphere in the countries they left behind. In Political reality, Latinos are also becoming increasingly relevant actors with influence in political processes both "here" and "there." Culturally Latinos not only are significantly reshaping the ethos of their new communities but also are responsible for significant social transformations their countries of origin.

Several features characterize the new Latin American immigration to the United States. First, a growing body of research suggests that the economic restructuring and sociocultural changes taking place in the Americas virtually ensure that Latin America immigration to the United States will be a long-term phenomenon. Globalization and economic restructuring have intensified inequality in Latin America, generating unemployment and underemployment-and hence new migratory waves. The extremely high flow of Latin American immigration to the United States during the last two decades will eventually decrease, but it is safe to assume that Latin Americans will continue to dominate immigration to the United states over the next decades.

Second, new data suggest that the immigration momentum we are currently witnessing cannot be easily contained by unilateral policy initiatives, such as the various border control efforts and theatrics that have intensified over the last decade. Transnational labor-recruiting networks, family reunification, and wage differentials continue to act as a powerful impetus to Latin American immigration to the United States.

Third, new data suggest that Latin American immigrants, especially Mexicans and Central Americans, are more likely to settle permanently in the Unite States than those

who arrived in the previous eras of immigration. Latinos, therefore, are an enduring, rather than a transient, feature of the new American social landscape.

Suares-Orozco and Paez continue speaking about the sociohistorical experience of the Latino immigrants.<sup>53</sup> They affirm that the Latino presence in the United States is largely defined by immigration. The vast majority of Latinos have been directly or indirectly touched by the experience of immigration. This part of a shared experience and history brings together the various distinct paths Latinos have taken in their journey to the United States. Although there have been differences in modes of incorporation and patterns of immigration, every Latino subgroup shares the experience of settling in this country and engaging in a process of social, economic and cultural adaptation. Latin American and Caribbean immigrants in general, and Mexican immigrants in particular, rank somewhere near the bottom in terms of how Americans view immigrants from different parts of the world. European immigrants are favored, and Asians fall in the middle. In comparison with Latin American immigrants, Asian immigrants are perceived as less likely to use welfare or commit crimes, and more likely to work hard, to have strong family values, and to do well in school.

Another axiomatically reality that helps us to understand the sociohistorical part of the Latino immigrants is that over the past century, Latinos have been leaving a continent rich in culture, natural resources, and beauty but poor in terms of economic and social development. Latin America is also a continent of startling inequalities.

Knowing the social and historical experience of the Latino immigrants as found in

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 30.

Suarez-Orozco and Paez's work, broaden once understanding about the profound demographic and cultural change taking place in our communities. This book helps us to see the relevant needs of the Latino immigrants, so that we may implement an effective ministry for them. The church has stressed wholistic human development by supporting Christ's statement, "Man does not live by bread alone " (Deuteronomy 8: 3). It understand that satisfying basic human needs is itself a humanizing process. Our mission is to go and to help those needy people through the relevant Gospel of Jesus Christ.

*The Liberating Spirit: Toward an Hispanic American Pentecostal Social Ethic*

*The Liberating Spirit* by Eldin Villafañe, notes well the impact of immigration on Christianity in the United States. His purpose is to construct a social ethic for the Hispanic Pentecostal Church in the United States. This social ethic, however, must cohere with the Hispanic America socio-culture reality and practical experience. This book contains practical lessons of the Hispanic-American immigrant experience. Using this experience the writer develops a theological framework and social ethic.

This material presents a deep analysis of the Hispanic America reality. Dr. Villafañe speaks about the heritage, the relevance, and the values of the Hispanic culture. He also discusses the Hispanic American religious dimension. This is analyzed and described under four perspectives: (1) The Roman Catholic Church; (2) The Hispanic Protestant Church; (3) The Pentecostal Movement; and (4) The Hispanic Spirituality and Indigenous Pentecostal Theology.

This book also describes the socio-history and socio-vision for the Hispanic-American people. It helps to see how urban ministry relates to spiritual and theological

principles. It analyzes the Latino reality under a socio and theological context. The Hispanic urban Pentecostal Church makes a great contribution on learning and to the interpretation and meaning of Hispanic historical culture.

The writer brings the concept of *Pneumatological Paradigm*, in order to explain the importance of the Holy Spirit in urban ministry. "A spirituality, if it is to be authentic and relevant, should correlate with all life; after all, the Spirit of the Lord, who leads and empowers, must lead and all areas of our lives."<sup>54</sup>

According the author, the history of spiritualities of the church reflects the spiritual pilgrimage of particular individuals and of particular people, at a particular time in a particular context. He notes that the Reign of God, the Spirit's historical project, takes seriously the world as humanity, creation and culture. Present history is affirmed, for history is the arena of the obedience of faith of the reign of God.

The last chapter of this relevant and necessary material, describes the foundation for a social ethic for the Hispanic Pentecostal Church, which rests in the development of a social spirituality. The author speaks of "ethics as *pneumatology*," the application of a *pneumatological* paradigm for a Hispanic Pentecostal social ethic. This social ethic becomes the practice of both a social and spiritual theology.

Ethic must be implemented as a *pneumatological* paradigm. It is reflected in love, justice, *koinonia*, services and other social-spiritual ministry. Furthermore, social action itself, reveals a practical theology: "Whatever form our diaconal mission takes, whatever its social strategy, social services, social education, social witness, or social action; it ever

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<sup>54</sup>Villafañe, *The Liberating Spirit*, 165.



needs to be reminded that action rally receives its character from prayer.”<sup>55</sup> Thus prayer and social action are the practical and contextualized way to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the *Shalom* of the city.

*The Kingdom, the City and the People of God: Urban ministry*

Harvie Conn and Manuel Ortiz, on the other hand, help us to understand serious challenges, like poverty, immigration, human exploitation and government corruption that cry out for answers in the city. The authors also give significant attention to developing and mentoring leaders among the laity for ministry in the city. A ministry to poor that begins with ministry among the poor.

The authors explain why so many Latinos like to immigrate to United States. The nations come the cities. It means that in many countries the primary flow is internal, from rural areas to cities. In those cases farmers have been pushed off their land through drought or competition with a large agribusinesses. They may have tried to work as labor on one of the large holdings for a while, but that work is usually seasonal and does not pay enough to hold them over through the workless perils. Men may leave wives and children behind to seek work in the city with the hope of returning, but more often than not, if the family reunites it will be in the city.

The lure of work or the desire to flee repressive governments has caused many people to move to other countries. Some seek freedom, some seek economic betterment, and many just seek the chance to find a job-any job. "Uprooted and transplanted immigrants, starting life anew in strange surroundings and needing community and friendship, flood into the city.”<sup>56</sup> These words were actually written before North

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 165.

<sup>56</sup>Conn and Ortiz, 118.

Americans were feeling the effect of the new immigration which took place after 1968, when the new immigration Act became Law.

The theme of Latino immigrants is present in Conn and Ortiz 's book from a sociological , political and economical perspective, they develop the question of how the new immigration has affected US. cities. For one thing, it has brought outstanding heterogeneity. For example, the 1990 census shows seven distinct Asian nationalities and ten distinct Hispanic nationalities living in Los Angeles metropolitan area. On the other side of the country, in New York City metropolitan area, there were five Asian nationalities and eleven Hispanic nationalities. Conn and Ortiz imagine the variety of sounds, smell and sights we would take in if we went through any of the urban areas that have attracted immigrants. Changes in the Latino immigrants affect the urban church as well as other institutions. People from all the nations are coming to America. The shift to urban and ethnic missions is probably the most important development in denominational and interdenominational home-mission activity since the closing years of the twentieth Century.

Another interesting and relevant thought concerning Latino immigrants by Conn and Ortiz is *the harvest*. They say that when people move from a rural to urban centers or immigrate to other countries, they tend to be unsettled. They face new values, new ways of doing things, and possibly a new language. At the same time they have left behind a large portion of their former support system.<sup>57</sup> Families, and friends are separated, possibly for the first time in their lives. "Immigrants and migrants have been

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 119.

so pounded by circumstances that they are receptive to all sorts of innovations, among which is the Gospel. They are in a phase of insecurity, capable of reaching out for what will stabilize them and raise their spirit."<sup>58</sup>

We must be willing to get out of our comfort zones and reach out to the nations the Lord has brought to us.

Interestingly, as long as we are surrounded by people, just like us, we do not think of ourselves as being ethnic. Therefore, it may be helpful to explore the process people groups go through when they enter a new city or come from another country. They tend to be segregated by choice. Naturally, newly arrived immigrants would want to settle with others from the same homeland, others who tell the same types of stories in the same language, who eat the same foods and celebrate the same festivals, and who may be helpful in the quest for a job.

In order to have a better understanding of the newly arrived immigrants, Conn and Ortiz speak about what sociologists call *assimilation*.<sup>59</sup> First-generation immigrants tend to stay with those like themselves for most of their lives. But their children and grandchildren - the second and third generations will have groups from school in their new homeland, possibly speaking a language different from their parents. They have been exposed to the customs and opportunities afforded the majority population and have learned better how to fit in. The result is that they become different from their parents. They have become a part of their new home. They have advanced educationally and economically and have mixed with the majority to the point that there are very few

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 120.

visible differences between the immigration and the majority. This is *assimilation*.

In this country, government and big business have united to develop an economically stratified society that to a large degree is laid out along ethnic lines. The groups on the bottom are the groups Christians have abandoned in inner cities, where other religions are taking hold. The black Muslim movement is aggressive and dynamic in many major cities. Christians do not want to go into Philadelphia's round house, which is the first place prisoners are sent while awaiting their arraignment, but Muslim leaders daily enter and minister to these men and women. Christians are throwing away tremendous opportunities to "make disciples of all nations."

The last statement developed by Conn and Ortiz about the Latino immigrants, helps us to see clearly their relevant needs. They say that in the process of immigration or migration, then, groups do not have equal opportunities in employment, education or overall economic well being. When a church is situated in a community that is either multiethnic or in a transitioning stage, some further problems emerge. To thrive, a multiethnic church must intentionally include all groups at all levels of leadership and decision making, so that each of the groups feels ownership of the church. The goal is to develop a new humanity that is inclusive of all, that displays both the diversity of its people and the unity found in Christ. There can be no justice without Christ. We must establish an effective ministry among the Latino immigrants for the *Shalom* of the city.

### **Practical Urban Theology for Ministry to Latino Immigrants**

*City of God, City of Satan: A Biblical Theology of the Urban Church*

Robert Linthicum's book, describes a practical theology for the church and its

spiritual involvement in the city; by its theological reflection about the function and involvement of the church in its community.<sup>60</sup> The church and the Christian community have also a sociological responsibility.

Linthicum's purpose is to define clearly the mission of the church under a Biblical perspective. He develops his work in three sections: (1) *The City, Battleground*, (2) *The Church, God's Urban advance*, and (3) *Spiritual Discipline, Power for Ministry*. Each of these sections has subdivisions that are related to the church's involvement and its responsibility with the urban community. The church has been called to be responsible to the urban community politically, sociologically and spiritually. The analysis of these functions help us to understand better the purpose of the "Great Commission of Jesus Christ" and the divine's purpose for the mission of the church.

Linthicum also gives a very clear explanation about the spiritual involvement of the church in the community. The presence of godly people is absolutely essential to the survival of a city. Scripture teaches that citizens need not be overly "Christian," but just consistent, quiet, committed people living-out their faith. Godly people provide for their city both an example and a moderating presence. The presence of godly people in the city, will save it from destruction. As long there are godly people in the city it will never be captured by Satan. The influence of the demonic and unjust may seem overwhelming in that city, but the presence of God's people keeps that city from succumbing to evil.

Chapter eleven of this book, "Life in the Community", discusses another

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<sup>60</sup> Robert Linthicum, *The City of God, City of Satan: A Biblical Theological of the Urban Church*, Grand Rapids, MIL Zondervan, 1991), 67.

significant theological contribution to the church and Christian urban community.

The church is called to be a functional community. For that reason it is necessary, that each member of the church needs to be other-directed. Each person's primary concern must be for the community itself, not the advocacy of his or her particular position or conviction.

Community is not simply a lovely theological concept or an ideal about which the church should dream. Community is a living reality toward which the church works. In the congregations, every members counts on count every other members to assume his or her role and take on the responsibility of contribution to the development and implementation of the community in that church. This reflection helps understand the church as an organic and biological system. *The church of Jesus Christ is a dynamical and functional community*, that has an evangelical mission to achieve: to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a contextualized manner. Our responsibility is to bring to the Latino immigrant community a relevant and important ministry.

Linthicum's work is an important practical theology for pastors and leaders who are interested in having an effective ministry among the Latino immigrants community. It is my desire to apply the theological principles developed in this book for the ministry of the Congregation Candelero de Dios; so as to minister the Word of God among the Latino immigrant community in a contextualized manner.

*Seek the Peace of the City: Reflections on Urban Ministry*

*Seek the Peace of the City* is a significant book in which the author presents a socio-spiritual response to the challenges of the city.<sup>61</sup> Dr. Villafañe offers a new

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<sup>61</sup>Eldin Villafañe, *Seek the Peace of the City: Reflection on Urban Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI William B. Eerdmann Publishing Company, 1995).

perspective and theological paradigm for urban ministry. It is a splendid and tremendous contribution to the mission of the church and to those who have been called by the Lord to bring to the people and the Christian community a transforming message of peace.

The material found in this book can be applied to the development of a practical theology. Servant leadership is a very important issue for the ministry. We as leaders need to know how we could serve both our needs and the needs of the people, in the city. To prepare an educational program to meet these needs, require an academic and Christian institution with a curriculum designed to teach goal and ministerial vision. The emphasis on being a servant affects the way courses are structured to accommodate clergy and laity. A servant oriented leadership training program focuses on Christianity in the entire city, not just on one particular area ministry.

The second part of Villafañe's book is a reflection on the concept of the word contextualization, a ministry that fits the situation in which it is located. This means that it will be necessary to adapt some elements to fit the particular context. The concept of praxis of a program combines *ministry practice with theological reflection* where a structured or formal program is envisioned. Empowering the whole church to minister to the larger city must be modeled by training programs, in both its external and internal relationships.

The didactical and theological principles developed in this book, becomes a practical reflection to minister among the Latino immigrant community for the *Shalom* of the city.

*Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation*

*Exclusion and Embrace's*<sup>62</sup> work gives us a practical and theological framework related to reconciliation and the applicable action of justice. Miroslav Volf presents a big challenge in *Exclusion and Embrace*. His relevant theological and sociological analysis of this society is a great contribution for an effective urban ministry. The author tries to apply biblical principles to this sociological reality. He attempts to apply the biblical lens to the issues of identity, inter-group conflict, and reconciliation.

It is very interesting how Volf speaks on the meaning of the words exclusion and embrace. Exclusion creates "the other" and isolates individuals and communities from each other. The other is excluded in various ways resulting in a divided world. Exclusion means that we are not connected to those of differing opinions of lives, we are legitimate in responding to others with indifference, ignorance, suspicion, violence. On the other hand embrace calls for rejection of exclusion and the sense of us versus them. Volf's theological purpose is to demonstrate the love of God to every human being. The Lord embrace of us, despite our sin, provides or us the model of how we should embrace one another despite our differences.

Volf explores the role of justice and compassion in the context of the suffering of this world. He shows that the embrace of others is critical in combating the power of exclusion. His challenge is not simply to live with one another, but to truly embrace one another. Thus, take to seriously the Latino immigrants relevant need.

Volfs' work gives as important and extraordinary biblical theological principles to work and support a multicultural urban ministry among Latino immigrants. It is an action of reconciliation, one that embraces those who have been excluded by this system.

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<sup>62</sup>Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion & Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Recoconciliation* (Nashville, TN:Abingdon Press, 1996).



## **Practical Confrontation**

### *Urban Churches, Vital Signs: Beyond Charity Toward Justice*

*Urban Churches Vital, Signs* is a positive contribution to the urgent discussion about the mission of the churches in American cities. Harper selects churches to illustrate creative ministries of redevelopment, social justice and engagement with the tough challenges of urban life in the city center. He tells stories tell of big things done by congregations of all sizes from 125 to 15,000 members. He describes convincing testimonies about authenticity and effectiveness, and the capacity to take risks, change, and grow. The stories described in this book not only supply models of churches and congregations that are doing creative things to live faithfully as Christian in the city. The book is a collection of stories telling the ways in which churches are expressing God's justice, *Shalom*, and love in the world. Part of the recovery of urban churches is rooted in their reengagement of the creative talents of urban people in their struggle to transform life into humane community.

The book an is an affirmation that innovative, constructive, and faithful ministry is taking place in urban churches, and that the ministry is of such great importance to the life of American Christianity that is should be widely shared. Vital signs in urban churches are the indicators of life in the body. Urban churches are a significant part of the body of Christ.<sup>63</sup>

It is the purpose of the author to tell stories of urban churches engaged in transformation.<sup>64</sup> It is written from the perspective that God is doing new and wondrous things in the world every day, and calling people through the churches to participate in

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<sup>63</sup>Nile Harper, *Urban Churches, Vital Signs* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans ublishing company, 1999), 4

<sup>64</sup>Ibid. , 5.

the divine/human drama.<sup>65</sup>

Harper's work helps us to visualize and to implement the necessary and relevant tasks for an effective urban ministry among the Latino immigrant community. It contains a wealth of ideas and possibilities for action, in the hope that we could be inspired to see a possible connection with our own ministry. Harper presents the following statement:

It is affirmation that innovative, constructive, and faithful ministry is taking place in urban churches, and that this ministry is such great importance to life of American Christianity that it should be widely shared. The decade of the 1990s is a decisive decade for urban church redevelopment, revitalization, and reformation. There is evidence of this in almost every major city in the United States today.<sup>66</sup>

We are called to have urban churches that believe strongly in congregational life and social responsibility. These churches create meaningful worship, do a good job of Christian education, and family life.

The stories developed in this book are a witness that the good news of Jesus Christ is alive among the people of urban America. Harper material gives us a very rich and valuable resource in these inspiring, well-written stories.

### *Spiritual Leadership*

This is a very practical book.<sup>67</sup> The author, J. Oswald Sanders was motivated to write it, due to the need of a good leadership for the church today. The purpose of the book is

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>67</sup> J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 12.

to revive spiritual leadership for Christian living today. Sanders develop the book in twenty two sections. In each section he describes the most relevant and important elements of the leadership. The first parts of the book describes the beginning and challenges of the Christian and spiritual leadership. Sanders sees the leadership as an honorable ambition. To aspire it, is to bring an honorable ambition to the person. Most Christian have reservations about aspiring to leadership. They are ensured about whether it is not better for the position to seek out the person rather than the person to seek out the position.

All Christian are called to develop God-given talents, to make the most of their lives, to develop the fullest their God-given powers and capacities. At the outset of any study on spiritual leadership, this master principle must be squarely face: true greatness, true leadership, is found in living our life in service to other, not in coaxing of inducing others to serve us. True service is never without cost, often it comes with a painful baptism of suffering. But true spiritual leader is focused on the service he or she can render to God and other people, not on the residuals and perk of high office or holy title. We must aim to put more into life than we take out.

The second part of this book presents the personal and spiritual qualities of the leader. Sanders says that the spiritual leader should outpace the rest of the church, above all, in prayer. And yet the most advanced leader is conscious of the possibility of endless development in prayer life. Prayer is the most ancient, most universal, and most intensive expression of religions instinct. It includes the simplest speed of infant lips and sublime entreaties of older age. All reach the Majesty on high.

But strange paradox, most of us find it hard to pray. We do not naturally delight in drawing near to God. We sometimes pray lip to the delight and power of prayer. We call it indispensable, we know the Scriptures call for it. Yet we often fail to pray.

Sanders ended his book with the prophet Nehemiah. He sees Nehemiah as one of the most inspiring leaders in the Bible. At times his methods seem somewhat vigorous, but they were used by God to achieve spectacular reforms in the life of his nation in an amazingly short time. Nehemiah was a man of prayer. For Nehemiah, prayer was an ordinary part of living and working. Prayer was his first reaction on hearing the plight of immigrants in Jerusalem. Nehemiah was stranger at the throne of grace (Nehemiah 1:4,6; 2:4;4:4, 9; 5:19; 6:14; 13:14, 22, 29). Nehemiah faced up to opposition without forcing a violence confrontation. He took insults, innuendo, intimidation, and treachery . He walk through it with his head high and his ayes vide open, with much prayer (4:9). When he could, he simply ignored the adversary. Always he took precautions (4:16.). Never did he allow opposition to deflect his energy form the central task. Always he kept faith in God (4:20).

The principles and qualities described in this book for spiritual leadership, are necessary tools for the successful and effective urban ministry. This book also will help us to understand and to see that a godly attitude lies at the hart of Christian leadership. It does not borrow principles of leadership from the world and apply them to the urban church and community, but rather derives principles of leadership directly from the Scriptures.

*To Live in Peace: Biblical Faith and the Changing Inner city*

*To Live in Peace* by Mark Gornik, has the purpose chagrining us all to indeed seek the peace of the city. It is the purpose of Gornik to consider the promise and possibility of God's peace for the changing of America's inner city; drawing not only on theological resources and biblical studies but also on history, sociology, urban studies, and other disciplines. The book raises three important questions: (1) How are we to think about neighborhood of relegation and ruin? (2) In what ways does the narrative of Christ incarnate, crucified, and risen shape the church to enact the gospel of peace amidst the daily heartaches and hardships of inner city? And (3) What does God's new creation mean for the encounter of faith with the inner city?

The first part of this book is a general and explanatory introduction about the status and condition of the inner city. Gornik makes a survey of current faith-based efforts in the inner city, specially, activities of faith that are grounded in the life of the church, placing them in theological, social and political context<sup>68</sup> It is the responsibility of the church and its leaders to change the city with a practical message of Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Gornik sees the importance of the church being an expression of God's Kingdom through its common and witnessing life. The church becomes the expression of the increase of the reign of God on the earth. The church is the community that lives out and bears witness to the ways of God's Kingdom in the city. Gornik seeks to explicate what it means to be a grassroots Christian congregation that, by its very distinctive kingdom focus social practices, and witness, is a source of gospel joy, and hope.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>Mark R. Gornik, *To Live in Peace: Biblical Faith and Changing Inner City* (Grand rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdman Publishing Company, 2002), 1, 2,

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., 32.

Gornik also attempts to develop a Biblical and theological framework for living for God's peace in the inner city. Drawing on the vision of Jeremiah in particular, he seeks to show ways in which the biblical text provides resources for the church facing the challenges of the global inner city. The church, must then express through various means, God's peace and justice in the city.

Further theological reflection is given examining the book of Nehemiah and seeing how the church can re-create an urban neighborhood. The study of Nehemiah yields a theology of the Holy Spirit, as rebuilding is seen as giving the neighborhood "new spiritual directions and modes of community creativity."<sup>70</sup>

It is very interesting to see how Gornik ends his book with the story of the New Song Community Church. The description of how a church lived out the theological challenges outlined in the first three chapter of the book help us to understand and to apply a biblical and practical theology. The analysis and reflection of this book is a challenge for any urban ministry. It provides of relevant tools to serve the suffering and needed people. It offers us a theological reflection for the poor community in a urban context. It is also a reflection on the quality of life of life of people , particularly, people who live in our urban community. It is also a practical and theological work critical for effective ministry to the poor and urban Latino community.

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 127.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **Towards an Urban Theology for Ministry Among Latino Immigrants**

The field in which the church has, I believe, a great role to play and in which it is already at work is in awakening the consciences of both developing and developed ministries to the imperatives of social justice. The Church's job is to deal with sin in the social realm. Our thinking must not dwell exclusively on our personal relationship to God while we forget the corporate aspect of sin and salvation. Sin is personal, but is also social. The task of the Christian is to deal with sin in both realms. This section will examine three important components that help theological narrative for urban ministry among Latino immigrants. These components are: (1) The practice of social justice, which will help us to clarify and implement a practical and contextualized gospel among the Latino immigrants; (2) The need for peace (*Shalom*) , which will help us to understand that the church has a ministerial mission related to wholeness, soundness, completeness, health, harmony, reconciliation, and justice.<sup>71</sup> The church's mission is to bring peace to the disrespected suffering and needy people; and (3) Three important virtues for the *Shalom* of the City , which will highlight the virtues of "love of God, "love one another" and Compassion". The narrative of peace beyond suffering will be applied to the specific community context of the Latino people of the Congregation Candelero de Dios.

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<sup>71</sup>Villafañe *Seek the Peace of the City*, 2.

## **The Practice of Social Justice**

### **Understanding the Mission of Social Justice**

To best understand the component of the mission of social justice, we need to realize that people feel increasingly alienated from those around them, and bear little sense of responsibility for the well-being of their country, society, or even their own families.

America seen a strange and sad phenomenal at work beginning with the youth movement of the sixties. Idealistic youth rejected the materialism around them in order to seek social justice, love and peace, but in the process, they also abandoned morality and responsibility. The church must understand that Satan exists and that he has brought about this reality we face today. Linthicum declares this reality from another perspective:

The sins of the city's include self-indulgence economic, injustice, exploitation, and oppression of these less powerful than the oppressor (we see it even in the class bully in an elementary school). But all such social sins, the prophets declare, are inevitable manifestations of people who have given themselves over to the service of other gods (money, power, prestige, or commitment to their own group) rather than centering their city's life in the worship of the Lord God.<sup>72</sup>

A city's evil is made up of personal aggrandizement, self-indulgence, social injustice, and idolatry. That is why the church has been essentially ineffective in urban ministry.

The first rule of warfare is to know the enemy. As long as we hold to an inadequate and naïve understanding of a city's evil, we never appreciate the full scope and power

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<sup>72</sup> Robert Linthicum, *City of God, City of Satan*, 42.



of the enemy we face.<sup>73</sup> But this type of understanding demonstrates God's involvement in the affairs of humanity.<sup>74</sup> The church is called to proclaim a message of social justice. To name all that is evil and dark about the city, and particularly confront the city's systems and structures when they act in exploitive and oppressive ways.

In order truly to be effective in the city, however, the church cannot allow itself to be overwhelmed by the city's evil. It must take delight in the city, in the people surrounding the church, and in each other in the community of faith. We are called to feed the hungry, visit the sick and prisoners, shelter the homeless and poor- to express God's love in social concerns.<sup>75</sup> The pragmatic action of the church will be determined by its mission of the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, a gospel of love and social justice. This is the gospel of practical confrontation. Villafañe's *The Liberating Spirit*, speaks about this reality under a social-theological perspective:

Our confrontation respond to nature of the structure themselves. On the other hand, we are aware of their creatureness-they are institutions and structures by human, although their reality *sui generis*. On the other hand, we are aware of their possible demonic nature- the "power." On one level of the struggle, it "powers." On one level of the struggle, it means that the church must bring to bear, throughout witness and labors, the power of the Spirit to break the chains of hate, hostility, and injustice embedded in them by introducing the values of the Reign of God (i. e., love, justice, fair play and Setting in place a "chain of change" that Immediately thus, radical change- revolution), of gradually (thus, multiple and Cumulative amelioration reformation) humanizes these structures and institutions. On the other level of struggle, the church must witness to the demonic powers that Lie behind the scene, by reminding them of their defeat in Christ and the coming New age. This witness must be in the power of the Spirit, armed with the "full Armor of the God" (Ephesians 6: 10-18).<sup>76</sup>

During this practical confrontation we become involved with the proclamation of

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<sup>73</sup> Con and Ortiz, 258

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 259.

<sup>75</sup> Linthicum, 165.

<sup>76</sup> Villafañe, *The Liberating Spirit*, 168.

proclamation of the gospel of love, compassion, and social justice, which is a message of transformation and redemption for the Latino immigrant community of the city of Lynn. This is a good news for the churches. This is a good news for the people. This is a good news for the urban community.<sup>77</sup>

The church will understand its social justice's mission, when it creates ministries engages with the tough challenges of urban life in city. Social Justice also implies that the urban churches be revitalized and reoriented to new ministries. Ministries with vision of rebuilding neighborhoods, constructing new housing, crating new businesses, new schools and establishing community based health care center.<sup>78</sup> Harper is very clear about the social action of many congregations:

Many urban congregations have a history and tradition of compassionate social service among the poor, the oppressed, and the homeless. For more than a decade a variety of factors have come together to push, prod, and promote urban churches into more assertive, active, and creative role of leadership in community redevelopment. Faithful vision and spiritual power are at the center of the movement.<sup>79</sup>

The decline, decay, and deterioration of urban neighborhoods, especially in industrial cities, together with changing economic, political, and cultural circumstances, have contributed to the necessity for this new development.<sup>80</sup>

An urban ministry with a clear vision of social justice, understands that the city is to be a place of health, and the church has the responsibility to work for the longevity and

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<sup>77</sup> Villafañe, *The Liberating Spirit*, 201. 202.

<sup>78</sup> Harper, 7.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

health care of its inhabitants.<sup>81</sup> The social reality that we are living today is the same social reality that Jesus Christ, the Lord of lords and the King of kings lived. He confronted, in an aggressive manner, the religious leaders who were socially and spiritually abusing the poor and needy people. His confrontation was against oppression, exploitation, and social justice.

Our purpose is to apply this sociological and theological principles in our urban ministry. Also our hope is that the implementation of these ministerial tools could help us to have an affective urban ministry among the Latino immigrants in the city of Lynn.

### **Understanding the Biblical Theological Principles of Social Justice**

In the Old Testament, the Holy God of Israel is on the side of the downtrodden and poor, a God who listens to the sighs of the voiceless and the cries of the powerless, a God who liberates.<sup>82</sup> This liberations is a demonstration of the love of God and his compassion for the humanity. We are called to support those who are suffering by the exploitation and oppression of the oppressor. God desires justice all area of life. This message comes to us from every part of scripture. In the commandment of the Law, the protection of the poor is a major focus of the public establishment of justice. Among many examples is one from Deuteronomy: "You shall appointment judges and officials though your...tribes and they shall render just decisions for he people....Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue" (Deuteronomy 16: 18-20).

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<sup>81</sup> Linthicum, 165.

<sup>82</sup> Volf, 105.

The poor of Israel were suffering in an environment of exploitation, oppression, and violence by the leaders of Israel, Amos presents the message of transformation, a revolutionary message of social justice (Amos 7:7-9). The Lord called his people to live in justice, (Amos 5:24). He demands from his people that they live in social justice—justice among the people, justice in the people and justice in piety.<sup>83</sup> A model of religious leaders directly confronting secular power occurs in the interchange between Amos and Amaziah. Amos confronts the court prophet Amaziah to pronounce judgment against king Jeroboam (Amos 7: 10-17).

In the New Testament, God also requires actions of social justice—freeing the oppressed, feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless. The Lord has delegate this mission to the church through our Lord Jesus Christ (Luke 4: 18). In Matthew 25: 31, as Jesus is concluding His Olivet discourse concerning the end of the age, He paints a word picture of a heavenly judgment scene when, "All the nations (Greek: *ethnos*) will be gathered before him, and he will separate the sheep from the goats." How will this judgment be determined? The sheep and goats will be distinguished by how they respond to the hungry, the thirsty the stranger (a foreigner), those in need of clothing, the sick and those who are in prison. The righteous—seemingly almost without thinking about it—acted by feeding the hungry, supplying drinks for thirsty, inviting the stranger in, clothing the needy, looking after sick, and visiting the prisoners (Matthew 25: 34-40). These faithful ones are commended and rewarded for their hospitality and service to the disenfranchised. The wicked, on the other hand—oblivious to the opportunity and need

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<sup>83</sup> Eldin Villafane, *Fe, Espiritualidad y Justicia: Teología Posmoderna de un Boricua in la diaspora* (Rio Piedra, Puerto Rico: Publicaciones Palabra y Mas, 2006), 28. 29

service to the disenfranchised. The wicked, on the other hand—oblivious to the opportunity and need around them—failed to act and thus suffered the judgment of God.

One very important service of the Church, in keeping with its mission of reconciliation, is to stress the need for partnership to assist in the full development of each member of the human race.<sup>84</sup> The developed and developing Christian's ministries need each other if sufficiently rapid development is to take place to provide the basic material necessities of life which normally are the preconditions of any truly human progress.<sup>85</sup> The Christian gospel, with its emphasis on repentance, comes into its own. This Gospel must be preached unceasingly and must be applied in a concrete manner ( 2 Timothy 4: 4).

Constant teaching of the imperatives of Christian love (which love includes justice, for how can one be truly said to love anyone if he does not practice justice toward him?) is the message that the world must heed if it is to become the better world for which so many are so earnestly striving. Yet so often this kind of message is not heeded. It is the church's mission to persevere, rejoicing when its message is heeded (and there are many reasons for rejoicing today), sad when it is not, but ever faithful to it and prepared never to abandon it and support the ruthlessness of the oppressor (whether of harsh rulers or radical extremists) on the pretext of being more effective.

In First Peter we find special insight into our mission as followers of Jesus. To begin, Peter uses two interesting phrases to identify the people at that time. He calls them

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<sup>84</sup> Arthur Mccomack, *The Population Explosion: A Christian Concern* (New York, NY: Harper & Row Publishers, 1973, 67.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 68.

“visiting strangers” and “resident aliens” (1 Peter 2: 11). These terms have been translated variously as “exiles,” “aliens” and “strangers,” to describe people who have found themselves either passing through foreign territory or temporarily living in a foreign country.<sup>86</sup> Almost always some calamity had forced them from their homes to foreign homes soil—famine, plague, or war.<sup>87</sup> To be “strangers” or “aliens” meant they did not belong, even if they had settled down, built homes, and found work. Since they lack "native" or "citizen" status, they were denied privileges and rights that others around them enjoyed. For that reason, they would likely suffer at least mild forms of discrimination, if not blatant persecution. The terms described by Peter illustrate the situation of Christian in the world. God has made us a new and different kind of people for that reason we also live the life of “aliens” and “strangers” among other people in the world (1 Peter 1:1,17;2:11). We as Christians should not trace our roots to others in this world, but to God. He has called us to be different (1 Peter 1:14-16), we live as “aliens and strangers.” We Christian citizen of the US are different because our mission is to love the aliens and strangers in this country, who come to us seeking for compassion, love and social justice.<sup>88</sup>

If we take the mission of ministering seriously and effectively among the Latino people, who are strangers in the USA alienated from their home countries, we will develop and experience church as the family of God. Our churches will be home for

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<sup>86</sup> David Kendall, *God's Call to be Like Jesus* ( Indianapolis, IN: Light and Life Communication, 1999), 118.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 129.

people whose experiences in the world have left them physically, emotionally and spiritually homeless. will be home for people whose experiences in the world have left them physically, emotionally and spiritually homeless.<sup>89</sup> We must take care that our programs and ministries, and the mood or climate of our people, communicate a welcoming Spirit to the suffering and alienated people. These are people who are victim of this system, particularly those Latino immigrants who are in this country without their legal status of immigration. In some cases this may be accomplished simply by direction and shaping what is already in the church. Yet, underneath this climate of loving acceptance must be a vital spiritual reality. Jesus indicated that He was sent to "proclaim release to the captive and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim the year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19). When Jesus spoke in the synagogue in Nazareth he read these words taken from Isaiah 61:1 to announce the great needs upon which his ministry would focus. Jesus confronted his enemies with power and authority. He was not afraid of them or their oppressive power.

Some social and relational pressures we feel are not positive. Although those who love and care for us can, by their emotional appeal, exert a powerful force to draw us away from doing the right thing, they are not the only ones with such influence. We also experience strong emotional reaction in relation to those who actively oppose us. Exposure (real or perceived) to those who oppose us may lead us to compromise and walk away from doing the right thing. Jesus, the son of God, experienced such opposition from a variety of group in his ministerial life. In general, they were the religious establishment authorities (Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, Priest, and Lawyer)

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 130.

and political authorities (Herold and Pilate). From the earliest days of His public ministry, Jesus' s action and words on behalf of the poor, suffering and needy people, generated hostile reaction from the religious authorities (Mark 2: 1-3:6; John 2: 13-22).<sup>90</sup> Villafañe presents a important theological statement, that is critical to our ministry:

It is at the cross of Christ that paradoxically our poverty and powerlessness are transvaluated into the power of God for personal and social transformation. The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is not only a historical reality that is crucial to our theological self-understanding and experience of redemption, but it is also a paradigm—a model—for our lives and for the life of the church—especially if it is to play a redemptive and revitalizing role in the urban world.<sup>91</sup>

Jesus is the model for an effective and relevant ministry among the oppressed and suffering people. He is the anointed one (Luke 4: 18), “the paradigm par excellence” of the type of spirituality we in the church must exhibit in order to be anointed for our ministry in Lynn.<sup>92</sup>

### **The Need for Peace (*Shalom*)**

#### **The reality of peace**

The Hebrew word for peace (*Shalom*) denotes a sense of completion, perfection. It also means “well being” or prosperity”, not just “the absence of conflict.” Thus, Judaism, peace is not only the opposite of war, it an idea state of affairs.<sup>93</sup> In this sense, peace – perfection is something that will not be totally achieved until the messianic era. When the

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<sup>90</sup> Jim Herrington, R. Robert Creech and Trisha Taylor, *The Leader's Journey* (Dallas, Texas: Jossey-Bass Publication, 2003), 22.

<sup>91</sup> Villafañe, *Seek the Peace of the City*, 31.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 53.



When the Messiah comes, “nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Isaiah 2: 4), but this will be part of a general societal harmony and perfection. The term Shalom also speaks about the mission of “today’s Church—a community of exiles and pilgrim.”<sup>94</sup> The term also speaks about reconciliation among races and ethnic groups and above all reconciliation with God.<sup>95</sup>

Creating the kind of community we seek calls for the best disciplines of urban community organizing and economic development; but, beyond this, it demands a priority role for the faith community. Only the faith community can supply that “something more” that it required if we are to enjoy community life in all its dimensions. Jeremiah 29:7 gives us a prophetic vision for the transformation of the city and the urban community. But seek the peace of the city where I have sent you find into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its peace you find your peace. This counsel has some obvious implication for the church as it prepares for mission among the urban community. Jeremiah makes plain that involvement in the larger community, with the aim of creation communities of *shalom*, is primary responsibility of the church. This is true even as the church struggles with the modern equivalent of the Babylonia captivity. The church struggle in a secularized society. In contemporary terms, the shalom community may be a city, suburban area, Hispanic community, town, or even rural village, but the church’s responsibility in each location is the same to promote peace and reconciliation.<sup>96</sup> Sectarian separatism and a focus of protecting and maintaining the religious institution in isolation must be avoided at all cost.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>96</sup> Kimmoth W. Jefferson, *The Version of Shalom for the City* (new World Outlook: Article 200), 2.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 3.

## **Practicing the Peace (*Shalom*) in the Community**

The meaning of the word peace (*shalom*), brings a pragmatic reality, which includes prayers for the community as well as social action. Intercessory prayer is needed for the welfare even of those who are the oppressors. Prayer alone, however, is not enough. It must be accompanied by action. Creating the *shalom* of the urban community and the Latino immigrant community today requires engagement in community organizing, community economic development, provision of direct services and public advocacy for social justice and peace. Speaking about the practical implications of the term peace (*shalom*), Villafañe explains it under an evangelistic context:

The essence of the gospel is *shalom*. In Christ peace has come (Luke 1: 79; 2: 14), by him it is given/bestowed (Mark 5: 34; Luke 7: 50), and his disciples are its messengers (Luke 24: 45). We are exhorted by Paul in Eph. 6: 15, and I like the way the New Revised Standard Version renders it, "As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace."<sup>98</sup>

To preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a contextualized manner, is a direct application of the proclamation of the gospel of peace.

Graceful-*shalom* speaks to the mission of the church. The church must be an embodiment and an agent of *shalom* in our cities and communities.<sup>99</sup> The desire of the Lord is to bring love, peace, and compassion to the city. The church must not have only a clear understanding of it, but also practice it in a general context with relevance. A good and effective ministry needs to be accompanied by social action.

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<sup>98</sup>Villafañe, *Seek the Peace of the City*, 11.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid.

There is not a good ministry without compassion and congruent with the suffering of the people.

The reality and the actual condition of this society demands a special attention, particularly toward needy people, those people who have been victims of exploitation and oppressed by the evil system. This is the reality of the Latino immigrants of the Latino immigrants in the city of Lynn. The Congregation Candelero de Dios (CCD) is in the process of developing a social ministry to help and support the needy people.

We need to understand that the community transformation is a Christian social ministry that takes seriously the effects of sin over all life and all the earth—the sin of Genesis 3 that alienated men and women from God, from self, from others and from the environment.<sup>100</sup>

The divine purpose in the practice of His Shalom is the transformation of the community.<sup>101</sup> The reversal of the sin and the restoration of God's order in creation and God's intent for humans to be full image bearers of the Godhead will make people more fully human, worshipers of God by the power of the gospel in word and deed.<sup>102</sup> The point is made that practicing the *shalom* of the larger community is a prerequisites for experiencing *shalom* in ones 's own gathered community of faith, it is the church.<sup>103</sup>

We are called to work for the good of the city.<sup>104</sup>

As people of God, we are called to be a godly presence and to be both example and moderator, and preserving the city, sanctifying and transforming it by being the people

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 343.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>102</sup> Ibid

<sup>103</sup> Ibid

<sup>104</sup> Ibid

God created us to be. Therefore, we are called to seek the peace of the city and to practice peace in the city. This is a very complex responsibility for the church to achieve in an absolute and perfect manner. But the church of God is very clear about its priorities.

Harper helps us to see what should be the priorities of the church today:

The church is clear about its priorities. Rather than renovating the building, the homeless and aged are fed, Central Americans and Haitians are supported, the gospel is preached, and justice is demanded. Although it has about 140 members, five thousand people a week use the church for self-help groups, meals, counseling, job training, friendship, peacemaking, and other services. The congregation worships with joy, everyone praying and sometimes even dancing. They are peace-seekers, but perhaps even more, in this day and time, they are speaking and acting for justice.<sup>105</sup>

It is the commitment of the church of Jesus Christ, to bring the *Shalom* of the Lord through a practical and relevant action. Commitment to social justice tends to grow from engagement, struggle, and suffering as well as from prayer and reflective thought. We need to understand that moving to appropriate action for justice involves both intentional risk-taking and intelligent organization.<sup>106</sup> The engagement of the church in the proclamation of peace for the community, implies that the church embrace the Holy Spirit to prepare team ministry and the creation of task forces to deal with the work of the church. In stead of creation programs, the leaders encourage members to listen for what God is calling them to do in the church and to create the conditions for those calls to become realities. The reality is to see a church characterize by a contextualized ministry among the urban community.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Harper, 63.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>107</sup> Standis, 187.

We are called to be a church that seeks the peace (*shalom*) of the city and the community. This is a church communion (*Koinonia*) of believers, with compassion for all people, particularly the poor and needy.<sup>108</sup> The church will be characterized by its wholeness and harmony, reconciliation among races and ethnic groups and above all reconciliation with God.

To have a practical ministry among the Latino immigrants community, is to care about the relevant needs of the poor. The church is to assume responsibility for the proclamation of a message of peace, social justice and compassion. David L. McKenna presents the following statement:

Compassion for others is the crowning virtue of Christian love.  
Compassion is also the practical demonstration of social holiness.  
The second greatest commandment, "Love your neighbor as yourself"  
(Matt. 22:34-40; Mark 12:26-34), directly repudiates the radical  
self and everything for which it standard.<sup>109</sup>

Compassion is the practical demonstration of our social mission and peace for the poor.

### **Three Important Virtues for the Shalom of the City**

#### **Love of God**

To speak about love (ἀγάπη) is to speak about the "*Shalom*" of God. It is a theological and divine characteristic, which is the most important thing that we need more than anything else. Love is not money, power or knowledge. What we need is true love of God, justice and compassion. Love is more precious than life itself and more important to us than air or water. The word "love" is so common in our world and in used

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<sup>108</sup> Villafañe, *A Prayer for the City*, 111.

<sup>109</sup> David L. McKenna, *Wesleyan Leadership in Troubled Times* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2002), 113.

in so many different ways that, for all practical purpose using the word “love” is meaningless in serious discussion about the love of God and the love which we should have for one another. The biblical writers were very conscious of this and fought to clarify for us a distinct and graspable meaning for what the Scriptures say when they speak of love of God and the love that we are to have for one another. The Greek language, was the language of the apostles and the missionary Paul; that language did not have one common word for love, as common in that world as our word “love” is in our world. The New Testament Greek had the word *agape* to speak about the love of God. No one will understand 1 Corinthians 13, Romans 12 or John 3:16 if he or she does not understand the meaning of the *agape* as the New Testament writers understood the concept of love. If this love is the mark of the New birth, how can one know he or she is born again if he or she does not know the answer here? The love of God (*agape*), is not a philosophical human ideal. Fundamentally, love belongs to God, but it describes a mutual relationships. A horizontal relationship of true love is gradually elevate into he church and its community, and a vertical direction with the heavenly Father. It is the position in which a person experiences a real and true love through Jesus Christ.<sup>110</sup> The love of God is for all human kind.<sup>111</sup>

The love of God was revealed through his only Son to bring peace, salvation and social justice to this world (Jeremiah 31:3; John 3:16). Jesus has the same love for all human being. This is an unconditional and compassionate love. Only through the love of God do we have existence. Through his love for the people and the Christian community,

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<sup>110</sup> Sub Myung , *True Family and Word Peace* (New York: Has Publications, 2000), 149.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

his name is glorified. God's love made the world that he might communicate with it, and that the creatures in the world might receive His glory; both with the mind and heart.<sup>112</sup> There is not other way to describe an explain the love and the glory of God. His name is glorified through his love and compassion for people and for the Latino immigrant in the city of Lynn.

### **Love one Another**

The will of the Lord is to love one another, because love comes from Him (1 John 4:7).

The purpose of the Lord in creation is to glorify Himself and to demonstrate that He loves what He made. Therefore, everything is synthesized, everything is embraced, everything is crystallized into loving one another. The principle of loving one another has implications for freedom, good relationship, justice, peace and communion. It is fellowship with one another.

The Lord is calling the church and its leaders to love one another and to love the poor of the city. It is the only way to have a city and community of peace.

The principle of unity is an important element in the Christian community. Speaking about this important principle, Dr. Villafañe makes the following definition

In Scripture, particularly in Pauline writing, *koinonia* is a rich and fruitful word-concept yielding multiple meanings. It can mean fellowship or communion with, or participation in something, as well as collaboration, sharing, giving, distribution, and partnership. It speaks to us of solidarity and community. In biblical Christianity *koinonia* is a mark of maturity—of true spirituality.<sup>113</sup>

God has not only chosen us to love one another, and to be in communion, He has

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<sup>112</sup> McComack, 33.

<sup>113</sup> Villafañe, *Seek the Peace of the City*, 198

also called us and invited us into companionship with Him. God has called us to fill the world with hope, faith and love, to overcome the cynicism and faithlessness that is all around us. We are called to be transparently honest and incredibly just; to demonstrate a true love and integrity with every word and act. Being chosen to love one another is not dependent on how we feel or even on how we look. It does not matter how old, young, educated, experienced, pre-qualified we are, we are chosen by God. Therefore, the mission is to love one another, as the Lord loves us (1 John 4:11). The Love of God for the city, the community, the poor and the Latino immigrants is a real love. No special conditions are necessary to experience it. To have conditions is to force it. But where love is present, nothing can be forced.

To love one another with real love, is a divine request to extend the Kingdom of the Lord. It is also a divine virtue needed in order to have an effective urban ministry among the Latino immigrants in the city of Lynn.

### **Compassion**

When love becomes divine love, compassion also fills the heart. Love is the inner feeling and compassion is its expression. Compassion is an expression of our heartfelt concern for someone—for a suffering human being. Therefore, love and compassion are two sides of the same coin; they coexist. A great part of the loving is having compassion. The Word compassion comes from two Latin words: cum, and passion, meaning to suffer with. God's desire is to end human suffering and built a world and society of true peace. Compassion for people is a relevant and divine order. Compassion is not sentimental but is making justice and doing works of mercy.<sup>114</sup> Compassion is not a

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<sup>114</sup>Myung, 130.



moral commandment but a flow and overflow of the fullest human divine energies. It is expressed through our action and words.

When we act with compassion, we are sharing in Jesus 's power to bring new life. We are loving our neighbor. Compassion is a strong awareness of another person's anguish. We are called to share Jesus 's compassion and let Him be compassionate to others through us.<sup>115</sup>

The theological principles that emerge from the practice of social justice and *Shalom*, along with these important virtues of Love of God, Love one another, and compassion, will be critical for the Congregation Candelero de Dios (CCD) as it seeks to serve Latino immigrants in the city of Lynn.

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid. , 131.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Project Design

#### The Hermeneutical Circle

The overall framework of this thesis is reflected in what Eldin Villafañe describes as “the hermeneutical circle of social ethics.”<sup>116</sup> This paradigm involves three important steps, which together present a systemic analysis of my decision in social ethics. These steps are: (1) *Clarification*--What is going on? (2) *Conceptualization*—What does the Word of God and other relevant disciplines say? (3) *Confrontation*—How do we respond?

The first step requires careful social analysis to gain a contextual understanding of the issue (“La Realidad”). In Chapter one we discussed this clarification step. The second step is related to biblical and theological reflection, the review of literature, and project design, which cover chapter chapters two, three, and four. The third step relates to developing clear strategies, from a systems view of reality, that flows out of a confluence of the of the first two steps. The third step will be applied in chapter five. These steps of hermeneutic principles are applied to the ministry of the Congregation Candelero de Dios regarding Latino immigrants in the city of Lynn.

This chapter will include two additional components from the methods of systems Thinking: 1) Learning teams and 2) the Hexagon process.

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<sup>116</sup>Dmin Residency- Lecture in the course, The Church in the City: Confronting Issues in Contemporary Urban Society and Social Ethics of Urban Ministry, Gordon- Conwel Theological Seminary, Boston, MA. , June 2006.

## **The Hexagon Process**

The hexagon process is a systems thinking activity used to facilitate the formation of a learning team as individuals work together to unpack systems thinking from within the organization. The hexagon process provides an effective means for groups to comprehend complex social reality in a systemic manner. At an initial hexagon meeting, each attendee is asked to respond to a key question that is of interest to the whole group. After acquiring thirty to sixty responses, the hexagons are grouped in to five to seven common categories, with each category being given a name. The category names should be short descriptive phrases that give part of the answer to the initial question. After the initial meeting, a smaller core group meets to refine the categories and seek to understand how the categories interrelate. This can be done by crating a causal loop which illustrates how the categories interrelate as a whole system.<sup>119</sup>

### **CCD Hexagon Event: How does Congregation Candelero de Dios minister the Gospel to the Latino Immigrants in the city of Lynn in a contextualized manner?**

I have been involved with the ministry of the Congregation Candelero de Dios (CCD) for more than 26 years. This is a congregation that was steeped in a traditional approach of thinking and expression of Christianity; also a congregation with a traditional worship service. The spirit of compassion, perseveres among this congregation which is very important part of its Wesleyan heritage. This traditional thinking is not an approach that attracts the young people of the church.

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<sup>119</sup>Dough and Judy Hall, D. Min Residential Lecture , “Models of Systemic Thinking” Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Boston. MA. June 2005.

The church needs to approach the people with a language that they can understand. To have a relevant and contextualized ministry among the Latino immigrants community in the city of Lynn. A new vision for the Congregation (CCD) could present a clear message of salvation for the Latino community.

The leaders of the church needed to be transformed by a clear vision of the reality of the love of Jesus Christ. As a pastor of the church I realize that preparation is vital for implementing a new vision in the church. During the process of preparation, we must be dependent upon God, if this new vision is to be successfully implemented. In Beginning of this process, the elder (local minister) informs the leaders and the congregation of the new vision. This church accomplished the project through much prayer, maturity, surveys, and comprehensive education for all. Many negative emotions also came out as the idea of new vision project was put forth.

A question was posed to the deacons, elders and other leaders from the Free Methodist church of the New England Conference: "What is needed to empower a traditional church to preach a contextualized Gospel?" The word empower means to prepare spiritually, emotionally and intellectually. In order to contextualized the Gospel and bring a clear and relevant sermon to the Latino immigrants today, the church and its leaders needed to be prepared. They needed to be empowered by the Holy Spirit. Perhaps there is no biblical word that we can misunderstand more than the New Testament word *dunamis* from which we get "*dynamite*." Jesus gave us the power to preach the same message He preached, of repentance and the coming kingdom of God. We also are called to be empowered for ministries of healing and casting out demons (Mark 6: 6-13).

We need to be empowered step by step, higher and higher into the image of Christ the image of Christ, who is the image of the invisible of God (Col. 1: 15). Therefore, in order to empower a traditional church to preach a contextualized Gospel, the following categorization of variables were developed by deacons, elders and leaders of the Free Methodist Church. This categorization of variables were the result of two relevant questions:

**Table1. Session 1 (CCD Leadership Team)- responses to de question: What is needed to empower a traditional church to minister a Contextualized Gospel to Latino Immigrants?**

**Variables (answers)**

1. Analyze the old system of preaching
2. Prepare leadership to preach
3. Encourage education about a contextualized gospel
4. Create passion for a diversity of people
5. Present clear goals and objective
6. Show respect and sensitivity
7. Plan generational
8. Prepare congregation for the new vision
9. Pray
10. Discuss lifestyle evangelism
11. Set up leader's accountability
12. Attend seminary
13. Educated ministers
14. Develop In-depth Bible studies
15. Write a godly vision and mission for the church
16. Elect positive leadership
17. Call individual who allow growth both personal/spiritual
18. Set up community outreach program (feeding homeless in church basement of after program)
19. Plan social events for church members
20. Recruit young leadership with fresh approach
21. Preach expository sermons
22. Develop leadership that equips and trains members in the church
23. Design Christian education events
24. Find Leadership that has a grasp of current world events and issues
25. Allow the Holy Spirit to equip and empower the congregation
26. Preach the gospel in everyday language

27. Use real life situation to emphasize major points.
28. Preach the sermon in series so that the people get the entire book
29. Hold follow up Bible studies to give a deeper understanding of the Bible.
30. Teach the people how to interpret the Bible for themselves
31. Analyze book as a whole to bring up out the correlation today
32. Analyze the sermon as to what does word say
33. Make the gospel preaching a priority in the church
34. Provide solid Bible training for new believers
35. Build a team spiritual church
36. Raise leaders with a serious knowledge of biblical theology
37. Develop community services through our church members
38. Get into the field and out of the church competition
39. Understand that only the Holy Spirit can change people lives
40. Make prayer the first source of action to reach people to Christ
41. Help members of the church to discover their gifts and talents through Bible studies, and delegate responsibilities according with calling.

**Table 2. Session II (CCD Deacons) – Responses to the question: What hinders a traditional church from ministering a contextualized Gospel to Latino Immigrants?**

1. Lack of interaction with the community
2. Legalistic philosophy
3. Traditional methods which immobilize growth in leadership
4. Lack of community involvement
5. Egocentric leadership
6. Lack of in depth Bible teaching
7. Uneducated church members who are intolerant of new changes
8. A spiritually dead congregation
9. No- biblical theology perspective
10. Ignoring the meetings about the new vision
12. The argument that real life situations are used to make people fill good as opposed to speaking the truth
13. At which level of teaching is everyone going to understand the preaching fully
14. At which level of teaching is everyone going to understand interpretation
15. What are other follow up teachings
16. Some think that teaching giving one's opinion should not be done as the gospel should only include the teaching's of Jesus
17. Holding a self centered vision
18. Legalism
19. Being a religious person
20. Leadership manipulation

21. Lack of knowledge about the grace and mercy of God
22. A church disconnected from the personal reality
23. Emphasizing personal experience the biblical principles
24. Using human tradition and rules to minister the gospel
25. Poor knowledge of Bible doctrine
26. No compassion and love
27. Irrelevant preaching
28. Rejecting diverse preaching styles
29. Former structure and tradition of the old system
30. Refusing to believe in the new vision
31. Internal fighting take up energy from discipleship
32. Abuse of power
33. Prejudices
33. Wrong motivation by the leaders
34. Manipulation of authority
35. Hidden agenda
36. Living outside of the community
37. Poor community support
38. Hidden agenda
39. Congregational division that create two groups
40. Member leaving the congregation

**Table 3. General Categories in Response to the question: How to empower a traditional Congregation to minister the Gospel in a contextualized manner to Latino Immigrants?**

**A. Leaders need to depend on God      B. Preparation is necessary to minister in a contextualized manner**

<b>9. Pray</b>	<b>8. Prepare congregation</b>
24. Allowing the Holy Spirit to empower de church	2. Prepare leadership
<b>14. A Godly vision for the church</b>	<b>7. Plan generational</b>
<b>34. Building a team of praise</b>	<b>25. Preach the gospel in a everyday language</b>
<b>16. Individuals who allow growth personal and spiritual</b>	<b>27. Preach the message in a series so the people get the entire book</b>
<b>39. Making prayer the first source of action to preach</b>	<b>17. Community outreach program</b>
<b>38. Understanding that only the Holy Spirit change people lives</b>	<b>20. Expository sermon</b>

**C. Recognize the church needs human help      D. Motivate and engage the congregation**

<b>6. Respect and sensitivity to others</b>	<b>10. Life style evangelism</b>
<b>4. Passion for diversity of people</b>	<b>5. Clear and objective</b>
<b>1. Analyze the old system of preach</b>	<b>40. Helping members to discover talents</b>

**E. Be sensitive in dealing with the conditions of a traditional church**

<b>15. Positive leadership</b>
<b>11. Leaders accountability</b>
<b>37. Dealing with the church competition</b>
<b>19. Young leadership with fresh approach</b>



**F. Training the leaders to understand  
The new vision**

**G. Identifying capable leaders to  
minister the gospel in a  
Contextualized manner**

21. Leadership that equips and trainings members in the church	30. Analyzing the book as a whole to bring up out the correlation today.
22. Christian education	31. Analyzing the message as a whole as what does Word say and mean
12. Seminary	32. Make the gospel preaching a priority
13. In-depth Bible study	35. Raising leaders with knowledge of biblical theology
28. Holding follow up Bible study though	36. Development community service our church members
29. Teaching the people how to interpret the Bible by themselves	26. Using real life situation to emphasize major point
33. Solid bible training for new believers	18. Social event for church members
3. Education	

**Table 4. General Categories in Response to the question: What hinders a traditional church from ministering a contextualized Gospel to Latino Immigrants?**

**H. Lack of Knowledge to understand the new  
vision to minister in a contextualized manner**

1. Lack of interaction with the community
4. Lack of community involvement
10. Ignoring the vision of God places in leadership
6. Lack of in-depth Bible preaching
21. Lack of knowledge bout the grace and mercy of God
25. Poor knowledge on biblical doctrine
13. In what level vision could be understand
9. No biblical theological perspective

**Table 5. General Categories in Responses to the question: What Hinders a traditional church from ministering a contextualized Gospel to Latino Immigrants?**

**I. The new vision creates negative reactions**

**J. The new vision develops  
Spiritual warfare**

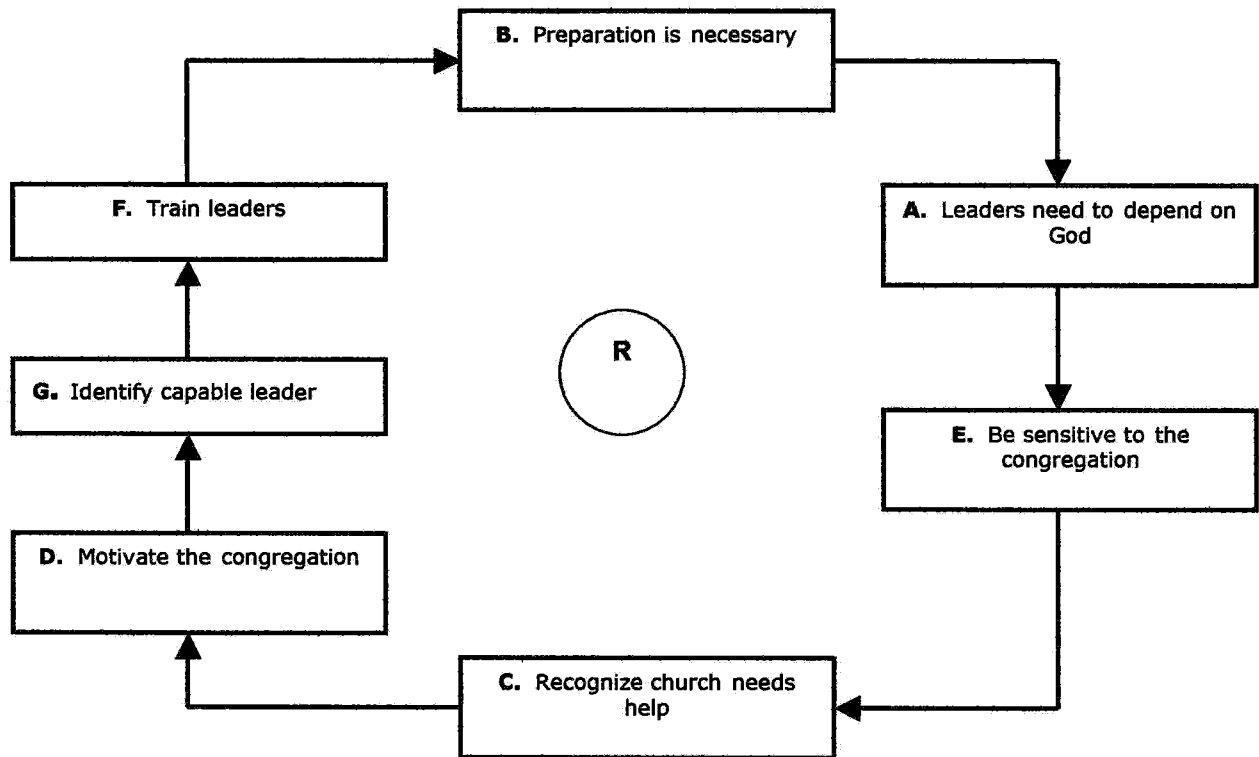
40. New members leaving the congregation	30. Spiritual warfare
32. Abuse	20. Leadership manipulation
35. Prejudice	2. Legalistic philosophy
37. Poor community support	15. Other fellow up teaching
38. Hidden agenda	7. Uneducated/intolerant member
39. Congregation divided in two groups	34. Manipulation or analysis
28. Rejecting diverse preaching style	
26. No compassion and love	
33. Wrong motivation	
31. Internal fighting	

**K. The new vision creates religious conflicts**

24. Preaching the gospel in human tradition rule
3. Traditional method
29. Former structure
19. Sound doctrine
23. Personal experience
17. Self centered vision
18. Legalism
5. Egocentric leadership
7. Uneducated/intolerant members
12. Argument that real life situation are used to make people feel good as opposed speaking the truth

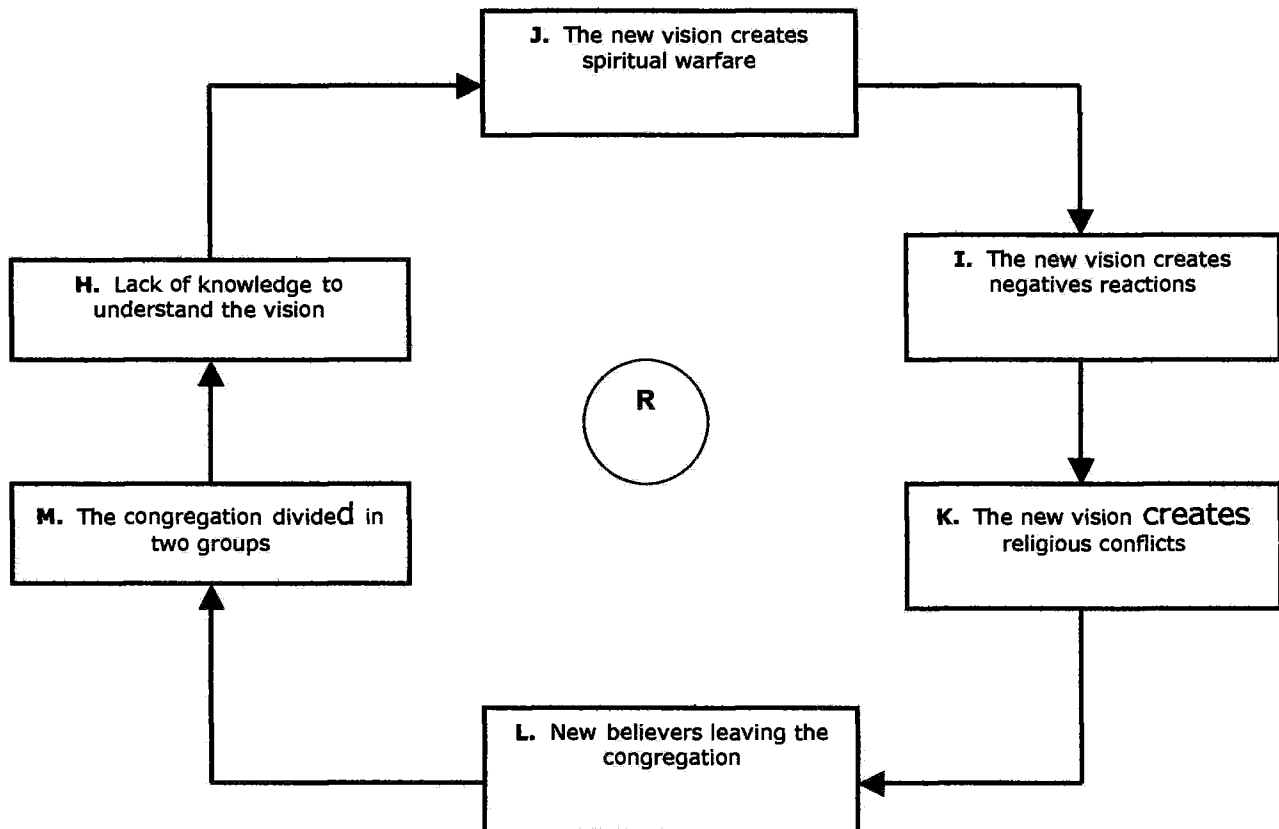
**DIAGRAM 1. INTIAL CAUSAL LOOP:**

**HOW TO EMPOWER A TRADITIONAL CHURCH TO MINISTER A  
CONTEXTUALIZED GOSPEL TO LATINO IMMIGRANTS**

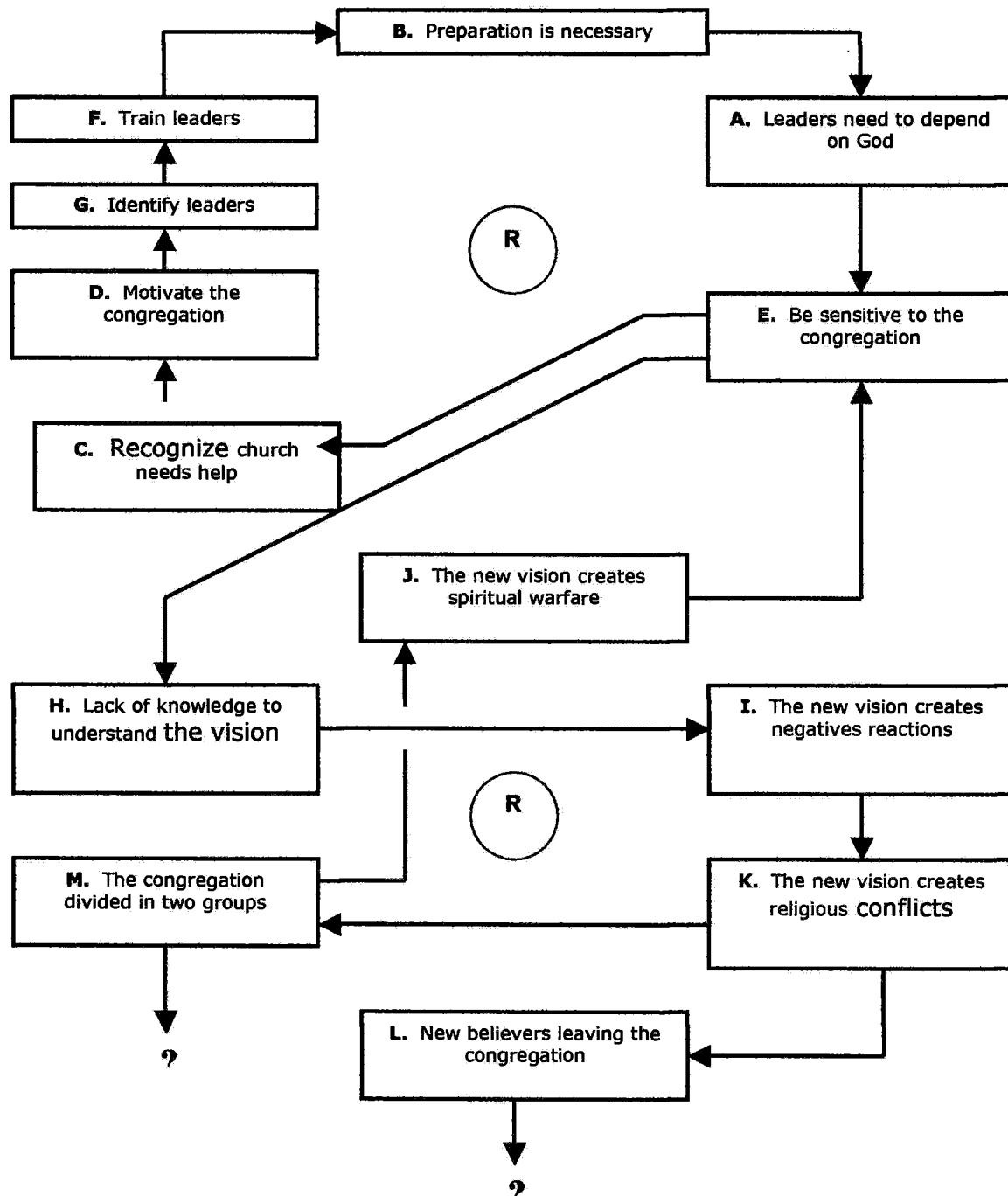


**DIAGRAM 2. CAUSAL LOOP:**

**WHAT HINDERS A TRADITIONAL CHURCH TO MINISTER A  
CONTEXTUALIZED GOSPEL TO LANTINO IMMIGRANTS?**



**A COMBINED CASUAL LOOP OF THE NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE TO MINISTER A CONTEXTUALIZED GOSPEL TO LATINO IMMIGRANTS**



## **INITIAL ANALYSIS OF THE HEXAGON**

The hexagon sessions and the causal loop diagrams were very important components in the clarification process. Through the hexagon we found out that a new vision for this traditional church was necessary. The learning team in the local church understood very well the process of the hexagon.

For the first three months, we were meeting with local leaders, deacons and elder ministers (pastors's learning team) from the Free Methodist Church of the New England Conference. Each of them presented his/her point of view regarding the new vision for the local church. They unanimously agreed that a new vision for the church was necessary. The church needed to change the way in which the church could go to the community and the community could come to the church. Therefore, the new vision was explained and discussed during the process of the hexagon. Each member was very involved in the process of the hexagon and watch the clarity of this new vision emerge. Each member of this learning team reacted positively.

The initial purpose of the learning team include the elements: (1) to discover relevant leaders with passion and love for the community, (2) to identify the new vision to others ministers outside the Free Methodist denomination, (3) to implement an effective and relevant ministry among the Latino immigrants in the city of Lynn, (4) to bring the Congregation Candelero de Dios (CCD) to the city with a revolutionary proclamation of social justice under a biblical perspective.

The learning team realized that need to be empowered in order to minister the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a contextualized manner.

In order to implement this new vision, as indicated in the initial causal loop, **preparation would be necessary (B)**. During this spiritual process the visionary leader would accomplished the vision through prayer, biblical studies and conducting surveys in the Christian community of the congregation. It becomes clear that there must be **dependence on God (A)** for a new vision if the vision is to be successfully implemented. The leaders will inform the visionary leader who will then inform the local leaders and the congregation of the new vision. The visionary leader would accomplished this through much prayer, maturity, surveys and comprehensive education for all.

Although many of the congregation have been waiting patiently for the new vision, others from the old tradition still feel as if the new vision detracts the contributions of those in prior ministry to the new vision, therefore, the new visionary leader must indicate **sensitivity to the tradition (E)** and sacred vows that already exist in the church. The visionary leader must be available for the dialogue to help navigate through unintended harm that has resulted from the implementation of the new vision.

Due to the massive criticism of the old traditional leaders, the visionary leader must reinforce the commitment to the new vision and **recognize the need of human help (C)**. The visionary leader is continually engaging and **motivating the congregation for the new vision (D)**. The visionary leader needs to communicate and motivate his leaders and all the congregation. The leaders and the congregation need to share a clear picture of the new vision. It is very important to explore the church resources in order to implement a new vision. Therefore, **identifying capable leaders to minister the Gospel (G)** is very important for the implementation of the new vision for the local church.

Without preparation, the kingdom of heaven cannot be established. Jesus, during his three years of ministry, prepared his disciples emotionally, physically, and spiritually. All good leadership is related to a good preparation to minister relevantly the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Therefore, **training the leaders (F)** would help us to develop an effective Ministry among the community of the city of Lynn.

The analysis of the hexagon indicates the reality of the local church being a traditional congregation with a complex membership and its need for a relevant and new visionary ministry.

Any new vision or any ministerial project, has opposition and negative reactions before it becomes a reality. Therefore, the visionary leader of the new ministerial vision needs to be sensitive to the church and its leaders, to help those leaders who are resisting change due to the **lack of understanding (H), negative reactions (I), and church conflicts (K)**. This could lead to **church splitting (M) and spiritual warfare (J)**. Then it could have an affect in the **new believers leaving the church (L)**.

Through the hexagon and causal loop, we see the counter-productively inherent in the current church. The church's identity and demographic also reveals a level of apathy and dysfunction to the new vision that impacts the ability of leaders to influence the church.

While the church has been working very well in ministering to the Latino immigrants in a practical manner, the unintended negative consequences from this success and traditional story has been the formation of mental models that hinders the preparation for an effective ministry among the Latino immigrants in the city of Lynn.



### **Reflection of the Analysis of the System and doing Systemic theology**

The integration and interpretation of the initial causal loop was difficult. Everything needed to be related not only to the purpose of the vision, but all the other elements in the loop. Two loops, one negative and one positive needed to be related to each other. From the systemic perspective, a clear causal loop needed to emerge only after several weeks of meditation and reflection. It could reveal a biblical and theological perspective. Even prayer to the Lord is necessary for the blessing of thinking systematically as one studies the Scripture. From the causal loop analysis, a new vision began to emerge. To have an effective visionary-ministry (a real gospel) among the Latino immigrants community, requires a healthy and authentic healing community ministering to its local neighborhood. The example of a holistic urban community will testify to the saving work of our Lord Jesus Christ more than any thing else. The priority of the church's mission and vision is the development and spiritual formation among Latinos immigrants in the community for the *Shalom* of the city. Our mission is to minister the Gospel of Jesus Christ relevantly to the Latino immigrants in the city of Lynn.

### **Practical Reflection of the new Vision**

During the process of the implementation of the new vision, two thoughts were conveyed to our congregation : (1), that God was not really interested in growth and, (2), that the pastor of this small church was a finer Christian than the pastor of a large church who made a higher salary. Not matter how high our goals, the task is many times determined by the budget set by the church.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Miller, 70. 71

Due to the implication to implement a new vision, we need to understand the following things: (1) a new vision affects budget of the church, (2) a new vision affects comfort levels, (3) a new vision requires a new understanding of growth, (4) a new vision must fight apathy, (5) a new vision will threaten people afraid to change.

As ministers we should ask the following question in this matter: Did we ever feel we were unpopular with many of our members because we were trying to disturb the comfortable while we were comforting the disturbed? So many are saying, do not disturb me, do not make me think, do not try to change me or make me uneasy. We do not go home feeling guilty even if God's Word makes us that way. Then there is always the problem that prevails even when a pastor or leader has an large Vision that of bringing the congregation to the level of understanding that says God wants us to grow. The Scripture strongly admonish it and record's growth, that spirituality is not determined by smallness, that involving other persons and leadership besides the pastor is not bad for the church, and that there are other obstacles that we see that are a hindrance to implement a new vision and growth.

I discovered that not all the members of the congregation are interested in the new vision. One of the major problems is the opposition and criticism from some of the traditional leaders. They do not like to make any changes to their styles of doing thing in the church. They say: "Why do we have to change the way we do things? It is not necessary to change the way the church has being doing things for many years.

Due to this kind of behavior, they may alienate and confuse the church. They are often not very helpful in the functioning of the church. It is necessary to possess the

sensitivity and love of Jesus in order to deal with this situation.

The Lord has blessed richly the Congregation Candelero de Dios (CCD) of Lynn in many ways. The church has seen how the Lord has been working with the local pastor to to enlarge the new vision for the church, "to minister the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a contextualized manner to the Latino immigrants." It is a vision that requires an active faith (faith is not valid until it is active) to influence the entire ministry of the church and its community.

The Congregation Candelero de Dios (CCD) and its leaders will benefit from this new vision. The community of Lynn will be reached by a contextualized ministry and message proclaimed by the leaders and members of the congregation. It is necessary to understand, that in order to implement a contextualized ministry among the Latino immigrants in the city of Lynn, it is necessary to have compassion, love, social justice and mercy for those poor and needy people that are suffering by oppression of this evil world. The church has been called to spread the good news of Jesus Christ in a practical manner. It needs to be characterized by a real and love and compassion (Matthew 10: 7-8). It is also the church's responsibility to bring a dynamic and spiritual influence in the community. It needs to emphasize the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the church responsibility today to renew its vision by the power of the Holy Spirit. Donald Riggs said the following:

Undergirding every correct method must be a living, vital relational walk with God and a special anointing of the Holy Spirit. "This spiritual renewal is necessary to keep us from being pleased when we influence people rather than seeing them genuinely changed.

The ministry of the church must be to become loving, dedicated, confident (faithful), godly, people who are able to successfully deal with what-ever problems and needs come to them.<sup>121</sup>

There is nothing more important for any evangelical church than to minister the Gospel of Jesus Christ under the influence of the Holy Spirit. The church must take the position, not just wait and hope for things to happen. It needs to be proactive and compatible to the community. The true church is alive, its life breathed into it by a the Sovereign God. Its heart beats with God's heart. It is one with Him and moves as His Spirit moves-where He chooses and often against the designs of man.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Donald Riggs, 19.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 20.

## **PART 3- CONFRONTATION**

### **CHAPTER FIVE**

#### **Outcomes and Implications of Important Principles for Ministering to Latino Immigrants**

We are living in a traditional and religious society. Therefore, it is very difficult to develop an effective ministry among a complex Christian society. In this last chapter we will seek to summarize and relate the learning that have been presented in the previous chapters. In order to clarify and realized this goal three important principles of our calling to ministry among the Latino immigrants will be presented. These principles will be applied to the Congregation Candelero de Dios (CCD) to implement the ministry among the Latino Immigrants in the city of Lynn. Following the application of these important principles, we will indicate some of the hindrances, influence for implementing a Latino ministry and mission among others Free Methodist churches. Finally, we will conclude the chapter by giving some practical reflections of the project, along with recommendations for further and personal study.

#### **Important Principles of Our calling to implement an Effective ministry among the Latino Immigrants**

Eldin Villafañe, utilizing the language of “hermeneutic circle,” refers to the importance of having a biblical and theological answer for a normative and relevant interpretation of the mission and ministry of the church.<sup>123</sup>

The Christian community has been called by the Mighty Lord to live under a biblical and theological reality in order to proclaim effectively the Kingdom of the Lord.

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<sup>123</sup>Villafañe, D. Min. Residential-Lecture in the course, The Church in the City: Confronting Issues in Contemporary Urban Society, Gordon-Conwell, Boston, June, 2006.

Therefore we need to understand the following about our calling: (1) Understanding the calling to minister the Gospel, (2) Identifying the calling to minister the Gospel, and (3) Understanding the empowering biblical basis to minister the Gospel.

### **Understanding the Calling to Minister the Gospel**

Being called by the Lord to minister the good news of Jesus Christ is a privilege. All believers have been chosen, called by name. The Lord has come to us, empowered us and chooses to walk with us through our journey, through this world to come.

Being called does not depend up on how we feel or even how we look. No matter how old, young, educated, experienced, or qualified we are, we are called by God to minister His Word. We are empowered by him to minister to the needy. Accepting the truth that all are called is crucial to an effective and relevant ministry among the Latino immigrants. Often in the church we stumble upon things that work that we do not fully understand, but ignorance is not always a bliss. It is belief that to understand how God works and how He empowers as can help us to better cooperate with what He is doing. We need to understand that we will be empowered by knowing that we are cooperating with God in doing his work, not in our way, but in His way.

We have the ability to be empowered by the Holy spirit because we are called by the Lord. Elmer Li. Boileaus, talking about the power of Holy Spirit said:

The Early Church, that faming fellowship, under the power of the Holy Spirit, went out from the upper room into the streets of Jerusalem to witness that Jesus was alive, and on that very day, 3000, were added to the church. We too, must tarry in our "upper room" until, filled and alive with the Holy Spirit, we will witness to our world and win souls to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>124</sup>Boileaus, 9.

If you realize that we are called by the Lord to minister the Gospel in a contextualized manner, He will empower us with the Holy Spirit to do it. We are called to do this ministry because this is the will of the Lord. The Letter to the Ephesians says, that we are not called because we are somehow superior people, but because of God's immeasurable love ( Ephesians 1: 3-10). That before there was breath of life in us, even before we were conceived, we were chosen with the capacity to be empowered by the Holy Spirit to minister the Gospel with authority. We will be able to have a clear vision of the world.

The Congregation Candelero de Dios (CC) will be encouraged in a prayer relationship with a loving, receptive Lord, in order to understand the calling to minister the Gospel in a contextualized manner. We must guide our church into a vital relationship with God.

### **Identifying the Calling to Minister the Gospel**

God has not only called us to minister His Word, he has also called us and invited us into companionship with Him. With that calling, we enter a life long process of listening and responding, each day taking another step toward faithfulness.

In many ways we are like young Samuel, awakened in the night by God's call. Samuel assumed that the voice he heard belonged to Eli. Like Samuel we hear voices that demand our attention. Was it is our own voice, the voice of someone we know, or the voice of God? It is difficult to tell and we have to learn to pay attention. Only when we listen long enough and lovingly, we do come to recognize God's voice.

When we do listen we may, like Samuel, discover that God's message is often uncomfortable and upsetting. God's call is not always a call to self fulfillment or ease. Often it is a call to abandonment and self-sacrifice. Being called by God to minister His Word means, walking in obedience to God's direction, even when it takes us where we would rather not go. It means trusting our life into the care of our faithful Lord and thus becoming more that we are without Him.

Being called to minister the Gospel of Jesus Christ inevitably leads to being equipped and sent by God with a message of light and liberation for the darkness of the world. We are called to reflect the light of Jesus Christ through love, compassion, mercy and social justice to all in all we do every day (Matthew 5:14-16). We need confidence in the power of the Word. The writer of Hebrews declares: "The Word of God is living, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thought and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4: 12). Note the expressive words that the writer uses in his description of the Word of God. Surely he had experienced this power of the Word in his own life. Jesus said: "heaven and earth shall pass away but my Word shall never pass away" (Matthew 24: 35). This gives us the truth that the Word in power shall stand even when heaven and earth are gone, and they represent to us emblems of great power. But the Word of God is greater and everlasting. Therefore, we cannot be afraid to proclaim and to minister His Word with power and authority. This is the power that the Lord has given us to obey Him and to proclaim His Word. The Lord called and commanded us: "Go ye into all the world and minister the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16: 15).



The call is not complex, but very simple: take the Word of God to all people. The biblical principle is to fulfill the Great Commission of the Master, a plea to get out from our seclusion behind closed doors, to break the border barriers, to be disturbed and dispersed to a needy and suffering world.

The calling to minister among the needy and suffering of the world is an exhortation to leave our comfortable pews and suffer shame, embarrassment and ridicule, if need be, so that the Gospel reaches out to the dying souls.<sup>125</sup>

God has called us to fill the world with hope and faith, to overcome the cynicism and faithlessness that is all around us. We are called to be transparently honest and incredibly just with the ministration of the Word of God; to demonstrate integrity with every word and act. Whoever has been called to minister the Word of God in a contextualized manner will meet resistance. The calling to bring social justice, compassion, and love for the needy and suffering will create conflict with the ideology of the day.

The church needs to fulfill the divine calling of ministering relevant the Word of God, by being faithful, by being faithful and trusting in the power of God. Our relationship with God needs constant renewal; our spirit needs constant nurturing, and our lives need constant substance. All these things could not be possible and sustained without the practice of daily prayer.

The Congregation Candelero de Dios and its leaders will be involved in training sessions and in monthly retreats in order to understand the calling of the Lord to

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<sup>125</sup>Ibid. , 10.

proclaim His Gospel. The congregation will understand that the church is called to function as a body, be fruitful as a branch, and to be faithful as a bride. Each member has been called by the Lord to minister His Word to bring His *Shalom* to the city.

### **Understanding the Empowering Biblical Basis to Minister the Gospel**

The Christian community is to take the need for human transformation seriously and is to demonstrate the sources and methods for that transformation. The unquestioned source is the Holy Spirit.

The mission to minister the Gospel of Jesus Christ with power and in a contextualized way, is a very important mission for the Christian community. To implement it effectively, the Lord will empower us with the Holy Spirit to minister His Word to the suffering. Jesus longed for His disciples to be filled with the Holy Spirit. He told them that it was necessary for Him to go away and that it was better to send the Holy Spirit to them (John 16: 7). It was better to be Spirit-filled than to be in the company of the incarnate Christ. The Lord Jesus also said that the one who prayed in faith would do greater things than He, because He was going to the Father and from there would send the Holy Spirit to empower them (John 14: 12; 16: 7). Spirit-filled people that minister the good news of Jesus Christ, are the church's greatest need today. It is the will of the Lord to empower us with the Holy Spirit to have an effective ministry and to be a blessing to others. Wesley L. Duewel says:

Being cleansed from self-centeredness does not mean that we are completely mature in Christ. Full yieldedness to the Holy Spirit only accelerates the process of becoming more like the Master. We have only begun to fathom the depths of His love. Thank to the grace of God, as our knowledge of His character

and mission grows, and our obedience by faith enlarges to embrace it the Holy Spirit will continue to fill our lives. Whatever we have realized thus far, the best yet to be.<sup>126</sup>

Not matter what experience of God's grace we may have known, we need more of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord Jesus spoke to His disciples to remain in Jerusalem until they could be filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1: 4). This infilling was necessary to proclaim effectively the Kingdom of the Lord. The power of the Holy Spirit is the most important tool for the leadership and the Christian community to fulfill the divine mission in this earth.

Each member of the Congregation Candelero de Dios (CCD) will participate in weekly biblical studies in order to understand our calling and the empowering biblical basis of ministering effectively the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The church will benefit from several conferences, meeting and training regarding the power of the word of God and the Holy Spirit in ministering to Latino immigrants.

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<sup>126</sup>Duewel, 4.

### **Applying important Principles for the new Vision at the Congregation at the Congregation Candelero de Dios (CCD)**

Due to the criticism by the old regimen and the traditions in the system of our local congregation, I will reinforce the commitment to the vision by continually engaging the congregation in the implementation of ministry. As the process goes on I realize that this feat is larger than previously understood and now recognize the need for help. Having reminded ourselves of the important biblical principles of ministering the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a contextualized manner, can we identify the importance and the benefits for the congregation Candelero de Dios of ministering among the Latino immigrants community in the city of Lynn. The church needs to understand the Great commission of Jesus Christ. Jesus proceeded to follow His plan as is noted in Matthew 10: 1, that “He called His twelve disciples and then in Luke 10: 1, the Lord appointed seventy others. Through the calling we can see that people are important; especially as they are the called ones. We note the kind of people Jesus called. He called people like Peter who denied His Lord. “At that he began to curse and swear, “I tell you I don’t know this man!” (Matthew 26: 72). Jesus also called fearful people, as the disciples seem to be, “The disciples were together behind locked doors, for fear of Jews” (John 21: 19). But in the end, they proved faithful and fearless. They followed: “Christ said, follow me and I will make you fisher of men immediately they left their nets and followed Him” (Matthew 4: 19-20).

Our responsibility is to follow Jesus and listen to Him for the proclamation of His Kingdom. We depend on God in order to have success in our lives. Our work will only be sustained as we depend on the strength and wisdom of our heavenly Father.

## **Understanding and addressing the hindrances to Implement a new Vision**

The implementation of any new vision will always encounter resistance and suffering from those who are more loyal to tradition than the movement of God. As we indicated in diagram 1, we need to be sensitive to the church members and the leaders who resist change. Problem always surfaces even when a pastor or leader has an enlarged vision. Therefore, one task is that of bringing the congregation to the same level of understanding the vision as God wants us to grow. The Scripture strongly admonishes it and records growth, among the early churches. Involving other persons and leadership besides the pastor is not bad for the church.

There are two major hindrances for the development of new ministry among others in the Hispanic Free Methodist churches: (1), *the traditional system of the denomination* and (2), *custom-culture*.

1. *Traditional System*: This system implies repetitions, a certain kind of invariability that claims an ancient source: “assumptions, beliefs patterns of behavior handed down from the past.”<sup>127</sup> Change brings opposition and criticism from the traditional leaders. The traditional leaders do not like to make any changes to their styles of doing things in the congregation, they raise the following question: “why do we have to change the way we doing things”? We need to reject formal traditionalism, which insists that forms must be maintained while core beliefs may adapt to newer ideas.

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<sup>127</sup> Diana Butler, *The Practicing Congregation* (Erdon, Virginia: The Alban Institute, 2004), 39.

The continuity of patterns of ritual, education, roles and administration can be maintained while accepting theological changes regarding biblical interpretation, creed and confession. Today's congregation does not need to appear exactly the same as to the congregations of a generation ago in order to maintain tradition.

(2), *Custom-culture*: This refers to what people do, actions in accordance with precedent. The Latinos congregation in this country are very practical. They come to this country with their own practical and religious background, with the same style of worship, and the same liturgy-traditional service on Sunday for example. To accept any change against to these customs is very difficult. So the need will to maintain familiar customs and gradually introduce new ideas of practices in small doses.

These basics hindrances of vision and neglect of change- are barriers that must be overcome in the Free Methodist congregations like Congregation Candelero de Dios (CCD) where the new vision to minister to the Latino immigrants in the city of Lynn has been implemented. In our discussion with others Spanish ministers, many commented on the difficulty they have in trying to develop a new vision for their congregation, while they have been with the denomination. They presented some specific hindrances to seeing ministry among the Latino immigrants. These are:

1. Lack of interaction between the community and church members
2. A spiritually dead congregation
3. Traditional methods which immobilize growth in leadership
4. Legalistic philosophy/ Theology
5. Self centered vision of the old system leadership

6. Religious personality against a believing Spirit filled person
7. Congregation divided in two groups with different opinions
8. Manipulation doctrinal by others local pastors
9. Refusing to change their traditional ways for example, to worship in the congregation with contemporary music, and clapping in the congregation
10. Immigration status: Traditional leaders refuse to use people in the leadership of the church who do not have legal status of the United States.

#### **Some Relevant Causes of these Barriers/Hindrances**

1. Lack of preparation of leadership in the congregation. The Leaders of the local church do not have any leadership educational training
2. Lack of communication. The church cannot be identified in the community due to the barrier of the language among its traditional leaders.
3. Irrelevant Lifestyle evangelism. There is not a contextualized evangelic plan to outreach people and to implement the new vision to minister the Latino immigrants. The church is in the process of implementing several cell groups as a new evangelistic strategy, will create an outreach evangelistic ministry.
4. Lack of a clear goal and vision for the local congregation.
5. Lack of motivation to work for the Kingdom of the Lord
6. A lack of theological understanding, and a lack of clear teaching of the strategic importance of Latino immigrants urban ministry.
7. Lack of contextualization of the Gospel of Jesus Christ
8. A lack of passion for a diversity of people.

### **Important suggestions to help remove these Hindrances**

Knowing some of the hindrances in the implementation of the new vision, “ministering to Latino immigrants in the city of Lynn,” helps in confronting them.

Theses are the following suggestions:

1. The congregation must seek the will of the Lord in prayer. Without a deep relationship with the Lord through prayer nothing can be achieved.
2. The local pastor will emphasize and teach with authority the importance of ministry to Latino immigrants in this country.
3. Seek new strategies to be implemented in dealing with the traditional leaders
4. Educational training sessions in the church for an effective leadership.
5. Evaluate very carefully the operation system of the church and its regular liturgy to find out what is relevant for the church and what is irrelevant today.
6. Establish weekly biblical and theological studies about the importance of the vision of the church.
7. Advocate for and assist the members of the church in overcoming immigration issues such as court, deportation, and legal assistance
8. Implement social activities to motivate the members of the church for the new vision
9. Develop preaching and teaching of the ministry of the church under a biblical and theological perspective.



### **Recommendations for Further Study**

To minister the Word of God effectively, requires a very sound and wholistic biblical and theological perspective. While these are many areas that could be noted for further study, the following are important:

- (1) What are the sociological and theological implications of developing ministries among the Latino immigrants without a legal status?
- (2) How can the Latinos churches be more proactive among the urban Latino Community?
- (3) How can Latino churches be ready to minister to the emerging Latino youth Culture that is due largely to the effects of globalization?
- (4) What are the most important strategies to minister effectively with Latino immigrants without a legal status?

The Learning team and the worship team of the congregation (CCD) have been working together to establish and implement new strategies to minister the work of the Lord to the community of Lynn in a contextualized manner for the *Shalom* of the city. It is a great blessing to see how the worship team through its ability to worship contemporary music in English and Spanish, reflects a ministerial cultural identity for the community of Lynn. The church has a ministry of counseling. Through this ministry many Latino families of the community of Lynn attend the church and many of them receive Jesus as their personal savior. This ministry is also an avenue for further study.

Our church also has a Bible Institute which provides biblical and theological education to more than 25 students from different denominations. Further study must be given this Institute so that it will fulfill its call to be relevant to its urban context.

This thesis has attempted to reflect the tremendous challenge in ministering to Latino immigrants in the city of Lynn, Massachusetts. The Congregation Candelero de Dios (CCD), affiliated to a very traditional denomination, faces many challenges that required the use of system thinking and the “hermeneutical Circle” to help it fulfill its Mission. With the help of the Lord, and the learning acquired in this doctoral program, we are confident that we will succeed in being a blessing to the Latino community of Lynn.

## APPENDIX I - POPULATION AND SOCIAL INCOME OF THE PEOPLE OF LYNN, MASSACHUSETTS

As the census of 2000, the city of Lynn has 89,050 people, 33,533 households, and 21,944 families residing in the city. There are 33,511 out of which 32.5% are married couples have children under the age 18 living with them, 39.7% are married couples living together, 17.6% have a female householder with no husband presents, and 37.2% are non-families. 31.0% of all households are made up of individuals and 11.8% have some living alone who 65 years olds of age or more.<sup>128</sup>

Another social context of the city of Lynn is the median income. For a house-hold, it is \$37,364, and for a family the income is \$45,295. Males have a median income of \$34,284 versus \$27,871 for females. The per capital income for the city is \$17,492. 16.5% of the population, and 13.2% of families are below the poverty line.

The final racial makeup of the population of the city of Lynn was as follow: 67.89% White, 10.55% African America, 0.37% Native American, 6.43% Asian, 0.09% Pacific Islander, 9.82% from other races, and 4.8% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race were 18.40% of the population.<sup>123</sup> Actually the city of Lynn has more than 20,000 Latino immigrants. Their sociological condition of living becomes very critical, experiencing: immigration, social, emotional, spiritual, educational problem. Language, health insurance, and other relevant and sociological needs.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> GNU. Wikimedia Fundation. Available from [Http:// en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org). Internet

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

## APPENDIX II – VISION, MISSION AND MINISTRIES OF THE CONGREGATION CANDELERO DE DIOS (CCD)

The Congregation Candelero de Dios (CCD) is a dynamic and multinational Latino congregation where the Holy Spirit transforms individuals into holiness in Christ and restores His people to right relationship. Its **Vision** is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a contextualized manner to set people free from the darkness of this world and to bring them to Jesus Christ. The **Mission** of the congregation is to disciple and train those people who have been saved through the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the proclamation of His Kingdom and the *Shalom* of the City. The congregation operates with the following ministries:

1. Ministry of Education
2. Ministry of Evangelism
3. Ministry of Men
4. Ministry of Women
5. Ministry of Youth adults
6. Ministry of Juveniles
7. Ministry of Worshipping
8. Ministry of Servers
9. Ministry of Cell groups
10. Ministry of Social service
11. Ministry of *Agape*
12. Ministry of Translation
13. Ministry of Consolidation for new converts
14. Ministry of Contact and visitation
15. Ministry of Dances
16. Ministry of Pantomime
17. Ministry of Intercession
18. Ministry of Prayer
19. Ministry of Married couples
20. Ministry of Family counseling

**APPENDIX III – TITLES OF SERMONS OF THE CONGREGATION CANDELERO DE DIOS (CCD)**

1. **Isaias 41: 8-88** **“Dios reafirma su promesa para sus hijos”** (God confirms his promise for his children)
2. **Marcos 5: 1-13, 18-20** **“La liberation viene de Dios”** (The Liberation comes from God)
3. **Efesios 5:18; Hechos 2:4** **“Lo que es la llenura del Espiritu Santo”** (The meaning of to be filled by the Holy Spirit)
4. **Exodo 19: 21-22; Lev. 11:44** **“Lo que es la santidad del cristiano”** (The meaning of Christian holiness)
5. **Santiago 1:13-18** **“Tentado pero no vencido”** (Tempted but not defeated)
6. **Lucas 9:57-62** **“Condiciones humanas para seguir a Jesus”** (Human conditions to follow Jesus)
7. **Jeremias 33:1-3,6** **“Dios responde a nuestras necesidades”** (God responds to our needs)
8. **Deuteronomio 30:15-16, 20** **“Dios prepara un plan para tu vida”** (God prepares a plan for your life)
9. **Romanos 12:1-2** **“Viviendo una vida sencilla”** (Living a simple life)
10. **Santiago 1:2-7** **“Beneficios en el gozo de las pruebas”** (Benefits in the joy of the trial)
11. **Job 42:1-6** **“Reconociendo nuestra limitacion para ver el poder de Dios”** (Recognizing our limitation to see the power of God)
12. **2 Cronicas 2:11-16** **“Si pactamos con Dios recibiremos bendiciones”** (If we make covenants with God He will bless us)
13. **Isaias 43:15-19, 25** **“Dios transforma las cosas pasadas en cosas nuevas”**(God transforms the past things in news things)
14. **Apocalipsis 2:1-7** **“Un llamado a retroalimentarnos”** (A calling to come back to feed our selves)

15. Hebreos 2:1-4 **“Perfeccionando nuestra salvacion”** (Perfecting our salvation)
16. Hebreos 2:1-4 **“La importancia de nuestra salvacion”** (The importance of our salvation)
17. Hebreos 2:1-4 **“Demanda Divina en la salvacion”** (Divine demand in the salvation)
18. Lucas 10:38-42 **“Deja que Jesus visite tu casa”** (Let Jesus visit your house)
19. Mateo 19:16-19 **“El seguir a Jesus afecta nuestros intereses personales”** (to follow Jesus affects our personal interests)
20. Juan 21:15-17 **“Jesus busca un amor verdadero”** ( Jesus is seeking a real love)

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## VITA

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